

STORY XXIV

HIDING THE EASTER EGGS

WHAT a lot of Easter eggs there were! I'm sure if you tried to count all that Sammie and Susie Littletail, and Papa and Mamma Littletail, to say nothing of Uncle Wiggily Longears and Nurse Jane Fuzzy-Wuzzy had colored, ready for Easter, you never could do it, never, never, never!

Of course, Uncle Wiggily couldn't get so very many of the eggs ready for the animal children, because, you know, he has rheumatism. But Sammie and Susie were so quick, and Nurse Jane Fuzzy-Wuzzy hurried so, that long before Easter Sunday morning, or Easter Monday morning, whenever children hunt for eggs, they were all ready to be found.

You see, the rabbits have also to hide all the Easter eggs that you children hunt for. Of course, I don't mean those eggs in the store windows; the pretty ones, made of candy, and with little windows that you look through to see beautiful scenes. Oh, no, not those, but the ones you

find at home. Those in the windows are put there by different kinds of rabbits.

Well, all the Easter eggs were ready, and Sammie and Susie, their papa and mamma, Uncle Wiggily Longears and Nurse Jane Fuzzy-Wuzzy, set out to hide them. There were many colors. I think I have told you about them, but I'll just mention a few again. There were red eggs, blue eggs, green eggs; pink, Alice-blue, Johnnie-red, Froggie-green, strawberry color, and then that new shade, skilligimink, which is very fine indeed, and which turned Sammie sky-blue-pink.

So the rabbits started off with their baskets of colored eggs on their paws.

"Now, be careful, Sammie," called his mamma. "Don't fall down and break any of those eggs."

"No, mamma," answered Sammie, who was still a little bit colored sky-blue-pink, for it hadn't all worn off yet. "I'll be very careful."

"So will I, mamma," called Susie.

So they walked on through the woods to visit Newark and East Orange and all the places around where children want Easter eggs. Of course, if you had gone out in the woods on top of Orange Mountain you could not have seen those rabbits, because they were invisible. That is, you

couldn't see them, because Mrs. Cluck-Cluck, the hen lady, had given them all cloaks spun out of cobwebs, just like the Emperor of China once had, and this made it so no one could see them. For it would never do, you know, to have the rabbits spied upon when they are hiding the Easter eggs. It wouldn't be fair, any more than it would be right to peek when you're "it" in playing hide-and-go-seek.

Well, pretty soon, after a while, as they all walked through the woods, Sammie kept going slower and slower and slower, because his basket was quite heavy, until he was a long way behind his papa, his mamma and Susie. But he didn't mind that, for he knew he had plenty of time, when all at once who should come running out of the bushes but a great big dog. At first Sammie was frightened, but then when he looked again he knew the dog was not a rabbit-dog. No, what is worse, he was an egg-dog.

Now an egg-dog is a dog that eats eggs, and they are one of the very worst dogs there are. So the dog saw Sammie and knew what the little rabbit boy had in his basket. But the dog asked Sammie, making believe he didn't know:

"What have you in that basket, my fine little chap?" You see, the dog called Sammie "little

chap" so as to pretend he was a friendly egg-dog.

"There are Easter eggs in the basket," said Sammie politely.

"And what, pray tell me, are Easter eggs, if I may be so bold as to ask?" inquired the dog, licking his teeth with his long red tongue, and blinking his eyes, as if he didn't care.

"Easter eggs," replied Sammie, "are eggs for children for Easter, and they are very prettily colored."

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed the dog, just like that, and he sniffed the air. "Please excuse me. But would you kindly be so good as to let me see those eggs? I never saw any colored ones."

"Well," answered Sammie, "I am in a hurry, but you may have one peep."

So he opened the top of the basket and there, surely enough, were the eggs, the green, the blue, the pink, the Johnnie red and the skilligimink colored ones and all.

"Oh, how lovely!" cried the bad egg-dog, sniffing the air again. "May I have one?"

"No," said Sammie, very decidedly, "these are for the little children."

Then that dog got angry. Oh, you should have seen how angry he got. No, on second thought I am glad you did not see how unpleasant he was,

for it might spoil your Easter. Anyhow, he was dreadfully angry, dreadfully! He showed his teeth, and he made his hair stand up straight, and he growled:

"Give me all those eggs, or I'll take them right away from you! I am an egg-dog, and I must have eggs. Give them to me, I say!"

Well, poor Sammie was very much frightened! He trembled so that the eggs rattled together and very nearly were broken. Then he started to run away, but the bad dog ran after him, and what do you think? Just as the horrid creature was about to take those lovely Easter eggs out of the basket and eat them up, who should come flying through the woods but Mrs. Cluck-Cluck, the lady hen! She dashed at that dog, with her beak and her feathers sticking out, and made him run off. Then how glad Sammie was! He hurried and caught up to his papa and mamma, and soon all the Easter eggs were hidden for children to find on Easter morning.

Oh, what fun Sammie and Susie had running back through the woods after the eggs were all put in the secret places! Susie found a turnip in a field, and Sammie found a carrot, and they ate them as they hopped along.

Uncle Wiggily walked quite slowly, for his rheumatism was bothering him, and when those

rabbits got home to the burrow, what do you think they found? Why, there were invitations for them all to come to a party that was going to be given by Lulu and Alice Wibblewobble. Alice and Lulu were little duck girls, and they lived with their papa and mamma, Mr. and Mrs. Wibblewobble, in a pen, not far from the rabbit burrow. They had a brother named Jimmie, but it wasn't his birthday, for he was a day older than his sisters, who were twins. That is, their birthdays came at the same time.

"May we go to the party, mamma?" asked Susie.

"Of course," answered Mamma Littletail, and they all went, even Nurse Jane Fuzzy-Wuzzy. They had a fine time, which I will tell you about later. But now I just want to mention one thing that occurred.

Just as the party was over, and every one was coming home, Uncle Wiggily, for a time, couldn't find his crutch, which Nurse Jane Fuzzy-Wuzzy had gnawed out of a cornstalk for him. Finally he found it behind the door. Then he, and Sammie and Susie, and Mr. and Mrs. Littletail started for the burrow.

Suddenly, all at once, when they were in the front yard of the Wibblewobble home, a silver trumpet sounded in the woods: "Ta-ra-ta-ra-ta-

ra!" just like that. Up came riding a little boy, all in silver and gold, on a white horse. He wanted to know if he was too late for the party, the little boy did, and when Uncle Wiggily said yes, the little boy was much disappointed.

Then Uncle Wiggily asked him who he was, and the little boy said:

"I am the fairy prince! I used to be a mud turtle, and live in the pond where Lulu and Alice and Jimmie Wibblewobble swim. But I got tired of being a mud turtle, though I *was* a fairy prince, so I changed myself into a little boy."

But, do you know, Uncle Wiggily didn't believe him, and, what's more, the jolly old rabbit gentleman said so. Oh, yes, indeed he did! Then what did that little boy-fairy-prince do, but up and say:

"Well, you soon will believe me, Uncle Wiggily. You come back to the woods a little later, and something wonderful will happen. I'll make you believe in fairies; that's what I will, for you will see a red fairy very shortly."

But still Uncle Wiggily didn't believe, and he went home, twinkling his pink nose and twiddling his long ears at the same time.

But you just wait, for if I should happen to find a penny rolling up hill, I will tell you, next, about Uncle Wiggily and the red fairy.

Of course if you don't believe in fairies please don't read the next story. But if Peter Pan and Tinker Bell believed in fairies, why can't you? Anyhow why is it that rain drops are always wet? Answer that if you please.