

Copied From A 1926 Newspaper

The Wonder Sack

By John T. Trowbridge

The apple-boughs half hid the house
Where lived the lonely widow;
Behind it stood the chestnut wood,
Before it spread the meadow.

She had no money in her till,
She was too poor to borrow;
With her lame leg she could not beg,
And no one cheered her sorrow.

She had no wood to cook her food
and but one chair to sit in;
Last year she lost a cow that cost
A whole year's steady knitting.

She had worn her finers to the bone,
Her back was growing double;
One day the pig tore up her wig,
But that's not half the trouble.

Her best black gown was worn brown,
Her shoes were all in tatters,
With not a pair for Sunday wear;
Said she; "It little matters."

"Nobody asks me now to ride,
My garments are not fitting;
And with my crutch I care not much
To hobble off to meeting.

"I still preserve my Testament,
And though the Acts are missing,
And Luke is torn, and Hebrews worn,
On Sunday tis a blessing.

"And other days I open it.
Before me on the table,
And there I sit, and read, and knit,
As long as I am able."
One evening she had closed the book,
But still she sat there knitting;
"Meow-meow!" complained the old black cat;
"Mew-mew!" the spotted kitten,

And on the hearth, with sober mirth,
"Chirp, chirp!" replied the cricket,
"Twas dark—but hark! "Bow-ow!" the bark
Of Ranger at the wicket!

Is Ranger barking at the moon?
Or what can be the matter?
What trouble now? Bow-ow! Bow-ow!"
She hears the old gate clatter.

"Is it the wind that bangs the gate,
And I must knit my stocking!"
But hush!—what's that? Rat-tat! rat-tat!
Alas! there's someone knocking.

"Dear me! dear me! who can it be?
Where, where is my crutch handle?"
She rubs a match with hasty scratch,
She cannot light the candle.

Rat-tat! scratch! the worthless match!
The cat growls in the corner;
Rat-tat, scratch, scratch! Up flies the latch,
"Good evening, Mrs. Warner!"

The kitten spits and lifts her back,
Her eyes glare on the stranger;
The old cats tail ruffs bit and black,
Loud barks the old dog ranger!

Blue burns at last the tardy match,
And dim the candle glimmers;
Along the floor beside the door
The cold white moonlight shimmers.

"Sit down!" the widow gives her chair,
"Get out!" she says to Ranger,
"Alas, I do not know your name."
"No matter!" quoth the stranger.

His limbs are strong, his beard is long,
His hair is dark and wavy;
Upon his back he bears a sack;
His staff is stout and heavy.

"My way is lost, and with the frost
I feel my fingers tingle!"
Than from his back he slips the sack,
Ho! did you hear it jingle?

"Nay, keep your chair! while you sit there,
I'll take the other corner."
"I'm sorry, sir, I have no fire."
"No matter, Mrs. Warner!"

He shakes the sack — the magic sack!
Amazed the widow gazes!
Ho, ho! the chimneys full of wood!
Ha, ha! the wood it blazes.

Ho, ho! ha, ha! the merry fire!
It sputters and it crackles!
Snap, snap! flash, flash! old oak and ash
send out a million sparkles.

The stranger sits upon his sack
Beside the chimney corner
And rubs his hands before the brands
And smiles on Mrs. Warner.

She feels her heart beat fast with fear,
But what can be the danger?
"Can I do aught for you, kind sir?"
"I'm hungry!" quoth the stranger.

"Alas!" she said, "I have no food
For boiling or for baking!"
"I've food," quote he, "for you and me!"
And gave his sack a shaking.
Out rattle knives, and forks, and spoons!
Twelve eggs, potatoes plenty
One large soup-dish, two plates of fish
And bread enough for twenty!

And Rachael, calming her surprise,
As well as she was able,
Saw following these, two rosted geese,
A tea-urn and a table.

Strange, was it not? each dish was hot,
Not even a plate was broken;
The cloth was laid and all arrayed
Before a word was spoken!

"Sit up! Sit up! and we will sup,
Dear madam, while were able"
Said she: "The room is poor and small
For such a famous table!"

Again the stranger shakes his sack,
The walls begain to rumble!
Another shake! the rafters quake!
You'd think the roof would tumble!

Shake, shake! the room grows high and large,
The walls are painted over!
Shake, shake! out falls four chairs, in all,
A bureau and a sofa!

The stranger stops to wipe the sweat
That down his face is streaming.
"Sit up, sit up! and we will sup,"
Quoth he: "while all is steaming.

The widow hobbled on her crutch,
He kindly sprang to aid her.
"All this," said she, "is too much for me!"
Quote he: "We'll have a waiter."

Shake, shake, once more! and from the sack
Out popped a little fellow
With elbows bare, bright eyes, sleek hair,

With trousers striped and yellow.

His legs were short, his body plump,
His cheek was like a cherry;
He turned three times; he gave a jump;
His laugh rang loud and merry!

He placed his hand upon his heart
And scraped and bowed so handy!
"Your humble servant, sir," he said,
Like any little dandy.

The widow laughed a long, loud laugh,
And up she started, screaming;
When ho! and lo! the room was dark
She'd been asleep and dreaming!

The stranger and his magic sack,
The dishes and the fishes,
The geese and things had taken wings
Like riches or like witches!
All, all was gone! She sat alone;
Her hands had dropped their knitting.
"Meouw-meouw!" the cat upon the mat;
"Mew-mew! mew mew!" the kitten!

The hearth is bleak, and hark! the creak,
"Chirp, chirp, the lonesome cricket,
"Bow-ow! says Ranger to the moon;
The wind is at the wicket.

And still she sits, and as she knits
She ponders o'er the vision;
I saw it written on the sack,
"A Cheerful Disposition."

I know God sent the dream and meant
To teach this useful lesson,
That out of peace and pure content
Springs every earthly blessing!

She said: "I'll make the sack my own!
I'll shake away all sorrow!"
She shook the sack for me to-day,
She'll shake for you to-morrow.

She shakes out joy; and hope, and peace,
And happiness come after;
She shakes out smiles for all the world;
She shakes out love and laughter.

For poor and rich, no matter which,
For young folks or for old folks,
For strong and weak, for proud and meek,
For warm folks and for cold folks.

For children coming home from school,
And sometimes for the teacher;
For white and black she shakes the sack,
In short, for every creature.

And everybody who has grief,
The sufferer and the mourner,
From far and near come now to hear
Kind words from Mrs. Warner.

They go to her with heavy hearts,
They come away with light ones;
They go to her with cloudy brows,
They come away with bright ones.

All love her well, and I could tell
Of many a cheering present
Of fruits and things their friendship brings
To make her fireside pleasant.

She always keeps a cheery fire,
The house is painted over;
She has food in store and chairs for four,
A bureau and a sofa.

She says these seem just like her dream,
And tells again the vision;
"I saw it written on the sack;
A Cheerful Disposition!"

TROUBLED

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