

## READING TIME FOR YOUNG FOLKS

### THE VERY LITTLE WOMAN

By ELSI PARRISH

A VERY little woman lived in a very little house in a deep woods. There she baked very little loaves of bread, and swept up very little piles of dust.

She looked at the small creatures all about her, the bees, and the crickets, and the birds. She said, "Shoo! I am a very big woman! You must not bother or annoy or ever contradict me."

The bees and the crickets and the birds said, "She is right. She is a very big woman. We must not bother or annoy or ever contradict her."

All but the owl.

"I have lived a long time," said the owl. "Every day I have gathered wise thoughts. The trunk of this tree is full of the wise thoughts I have

gathered. I know there are bigger women than this woman. Let her go to the palace and be the housekeeper. They are looking for one."

"Very well," said the very little woman, "I will go."

So she went to the Palace. The king and queen let her be the housekeeper.

"This is a very big house," said the very little woman. "Just the store-room is

bigger than my whole house in the woods. The king and the queen are giant people. They are very, very big!"

When baking day came she baked some loaves of bread.

"What!" cried the king. "These loaves of bread are very, very small. I can eat two in one bite."

When cleaning day came, the little old woman swept up some piles of dust.

"What!" cried the queen, "The palace will not be ready for the ball; These piles of dust are far too small. Most of it's left upon the floor quite as bad as it was before!"



*If you want to grow big,  
Each day you must try  
With all of your might  
To reach up to the sky.*



"O dear!" said the very little woman, and she began to cry. "The owl was right after all. I know now I am a very little woman, and I lived in a very little house, and I baked very little loaves of bread and I swept up very little piles of dust. What shall I do, queen?"

"Don't cry," said the queen. "I know what you can do. Every morning go out into the garden, and reach up and up."

Try to touch the sky. Did you hear? Try to touch the sky. It is a hard task. You may not succeed, but in trying you will surely grow. Little by little you will grow, until you are truly a big woman," she said.

"If you want to grow big  
Each day you must try  
With all of your might  
To reach up to the sky.  
You may not succeed,  
But in trying you'll grow,  
And so, by and by,  
You'll become big, you know."

This the very little woman did. And after a long, long time she went back to look at her house in the deep woods. She tried to go inside, but she was much too big to do that.

"Look!" said the crickets and the bees and the birds. "She IS a very big woman now—we must shoo!"

"Don't shoo," said the woman, "and you may bother and annoy and even contradict me. I am not truly a big woman yet, for see—I cannot quite touch the sky."

#### QUESTIONS

1. Did you like this story? Why?
2. Where did the very little woman live?
3. What did she do in her little house?
4. How did she feel toward the crickets and the bees and the birds? (She felt very much above them.)
5. What did she say they must not do?
6. Did the crickets and the bees and the birds believe her?
7. What kind of little creatures do you think they were? (They were kind and humble.)
8. Who was the only one that objected to obeying her?
9. What reason did he give for thinking there were bigger women than she?
10. Where did he say she had better go?
11. What happened then?
12. What kind of house did the king and queen live in?
13. Did the little woman realize it was much bigger than her home?
14. What happened when she baked loaves for the king?
15. What did the queen say when the little woman swept piles of dust?
16. How did the very little woman begin to feel then?
17. Did she still think that her own house was very big and that she was a very big woman?
18. How did the queen comfort the little woman?
19. What did she tell her to do if she wanted to be big?
20. Say all of the little poem from memory.
21. Did the little woman obey the queen?
22. What happened when the little woman went back to her home?
23. What did the crickets and the bees and the birds say?
24. How had the little woman changed in her feeling toward the crickets and the bees and the birds?
25. What did she say?
26. When do you think you would have liked the little woman better—before she went to the palace or after she came home? Why?
27. Do you think it is safe for us to boast about what we have? Why not? (It makes other people dislike us. Then, later in life, we may feel sorry because

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