



**SLEEPY-TIME TALES**  
**THE TALE OF HENRIETTA HEN**  
BY ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY

**CHAPTER I**  
**A Speckled Beauty.**

Henrietta Hen thought highly of herself. Not only did she consider herself a "Speckled beauty" (to use her own words) but she had an excellent opinion of her own ways, her own ideas—even of her own belongings. When she pulled a fat worm

They think enough of my eggs down there," she would boast—or a grub—out of the ground, she did it with an air of pride, and she was almost sure to say, "there; I'd like to see anybody else find a bigger one than that!"

Of course, it wouldn't really have pleased her at all to have one of her neighbors do better than she did. That was only her way of boasting that no one could beat her.

If anyone happened to mention speckles, Henrietta Hen was certain to speak of her own, claiming that they were the handsomest and most speckly to be found in Pleasant Valley. And if a person chanced to say anything about combs, Henrietta never failed to announce that her's was the reddest and most beautiful in the whole world.

Nobody could ever find out how she knew that. She had never been off the farm. But it was useless to remind her that she had never traveled. Such a remark only made her angry.

Having such a good opinion of herself, Henrietta Hen always had a great deal to talk about. She kept up a constant cluck from dawn till dusk. It made no difference to her whether she happened to be alone or with friends. She talked just the same—though naturally she preferred to have others hear what she said, because she considered her remarks most important.

There were times when Henrietta Hen took pains that all her neighbors should hear her. She was never so proud as when she had a newly laid egg to exhibit. Then an ordinary cluck was not long enough to express her feelings. To announce such important news, Henrietta Hen never failed to raise her voice in a high-pitched "Cut-cut-cut, ca-dahcut!" This interesting speech she always repeated several times. For she wanted everybody to know that Henrietta Hen had laid another of her famous eggs.

After such an event she always went about asking people if they had heard the news—just as if they could have helped hearing her silly racket.

Now, it sometimes happened, when she was on such an errand, that Henrietta Hen met with snubs. Now and then her question—"Have you heard the news?"—brought such sallies as these: "Polly Plymouth Rock has just laid an enormous egg! Have you seen it?" Or maybe, "Don't be disappointed, Henrietta! Somebody has to lay the littlest ones!"

Such jibes were certain to make Henrietta Hen lose her temper. And she would talk very fast (and alas! very loud, too) about jealous neighbors and how unpleasant it was to live among folk that were so stingy of their praise that they couldn't say a good word for the finest eggs that ever were seen!

On such occasions Henrietta Hen generally talked in a lofty way about moving to the village to live.

"They think enough of my eggs down there," she would boast. "Boiled, fried or poached, scrambled or for an omelet—my eggs can't be beaten."

"If the villagers can't beat your eggs they certainly can't use them for omelets," Polly Plymouth Rock told Henrietta one day. "Everybody knows you have to beat eggs to make an omelet."

Henrietta Hen didn't know what to say to that. It was almost the time she was ever known to be silent.

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**Jack and Jill**

"I see Myrtle Fane has a new fur coat," said Jill, as she passed him the bread-sticks.

Jack blushed. It was a sore spot with him that the family fund had not permitted a fur coat for Jill this winter.

Maybe Bill Fane is playing the stock market and had some luck," he said.

"Oh, no," said Jill quietly. "Myrtle's working, you know. Before she was married, Myrtle was a stenographer. She's been working part time lately in the office where she was when she married Bill."

"M'm," grunted Jack. "I shouldn't think Bill would want his wife working."

"Why, I think it's a good idea," said Jill quickly. "What's the harm?"

"Oh, well, it doesn't look right. And besides—"

"Besides what?"

"It would make me feel uncomfortable to have my wife working."

"But think of all the extra things that can be had," Jill reminded him judiciously.

"And think of all the things left undone around the house, too," countered Jack. "And other men talk about that sort of thing."

"What sort of thing?"

"A young fellow letting his wife

keep on working. Looks shabby, you know."

Jill pondered this thoughtfully. "But if the wife wants to work," she began.

"Other men don't think of that," said Jack. "They see a married woman working, and then they notice everything her husband does or has. If he has a new necktie or a new pair of gloves they wonder if his wife's money bought them."

Jill grimaced.

"Goodness, are men as catty as that?"

"Sure they are," said Jack calmly. "And it's natural that they should think so."

Jill plucked nervously at the soup-spoon.

"I was thinking it would be nice if

I could get something to do," she began tentatively.

Jack gave her a hard stare. "You don't mean go and get a job?" he demanded.

His Jill-girl nodded.

"Not if I know it," he said sternly. "Any little time that it is necessary for you to get a job it will be because I have lost my health and strength."

"But for just for a little while till I can get a fur coat and—"

But Jill stopped shortly as she saw the pained, unhappy expression on Jack's face. She hurriedly skirted the table and laid her soft round cheek against his.

"Oh, honey," she whispered, "I didn't mean to say anything to hurt my boy." She kissed him tenderly.

"As far as the fur coat goes, I

don't want any old fur coat," she said. "Why, I wouldn't have a fur coat. They're awfully common, anyway, and my green broadcloth is ever so much more stunning."

"But maybe, in a couple of weeks," started Jack tentatively.

"No, sir, not a bit of it," expostulated his Jill-girl. "I just wouldn't think of it, you old dear."

And just then the door-bell rang and a delivery boy staggered in with a huge pastboard box. And once the twine had been clipped and the cover thrown off, Jill's eyes went round as saucers, for there lay a beautiful fur coat.

"Oh," she cried.

And she turned to attack her terrible husband, but the brute had fled.

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