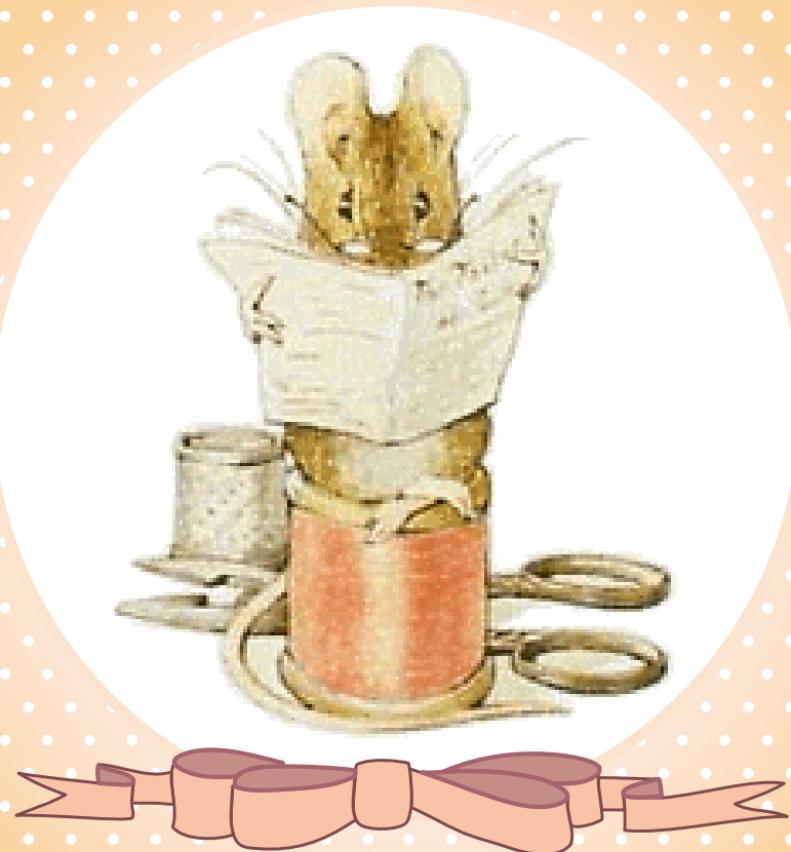




The Tailor of Gloucester

By Beatrix Potter



MY DEAR FREDA,

*Because you are fond of fairy-tales, and
have been ill, I have made you a story all for
yourself—a new one that nobody has read before.*

*And the queerest thing about it is—that I heard
it in Gloucestershire, and that it is true—at least
about the tailor, the waistcoat, and the*

“No more twist!”

Christmas, 1901



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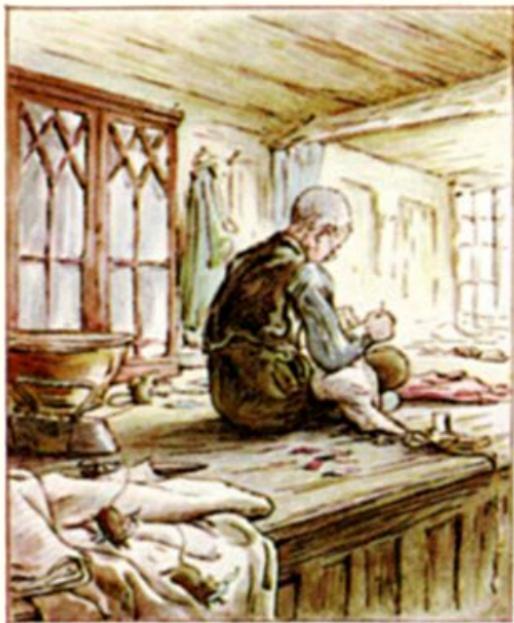
CHAPTER 1

In the time of swords and **periwigs** and full-skirted coats with flowered **lappets**—when gentlemen wore ruffles, and gold-laced waistcoats of **paduasoy** and **taffeta**—there lived a tailor in Gloucester.

He sat in the window of a little shop in Westgate Street, cross-legged on a table, from morning till dark.

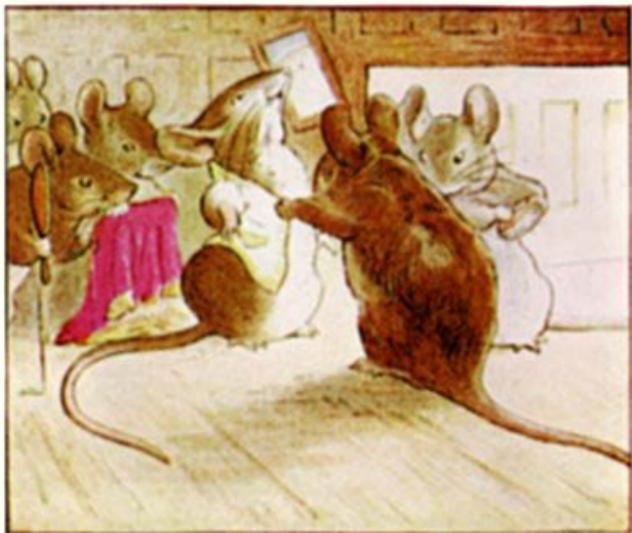
All day long while the light lasted he sewed and snipped, piecing out his satin and **pompadour**, and **lutestring**; fabrics had strange names, and were very expensive in the days of the Tailor of Gloucester.

But although he sewed fine silk for his neighbours, he himself was very, very



poor—a little old man in spectacles, with a pinched face, old crooked fingers, and a suit of threadbare clothes.

He cut his coats without waste, according to his embroidered cloth; they were very small ends and snippets that lay about upon the table—“Too narrow breadths for **nought**—except waistcoats for mice,” said the tailor.



One bitter cold day near Christmas
the tailor began to make a coat—a
coat of cherry-coloured corded
silk, embroidered with pansies and
roses, and a cream coloured satin
waistcoat—trimmed with gauze and
green worsted **chenille**—for the Mayor
of Gloucester.

The tailor worked and worked, and he
talked to himself. He measured the
silk, and turned it round and round,

and trimmed it into shape with his shears; the table was all littered with cherry-coloured snippets.

“No breadth at all, and cut on the cross; it is no breadth at all; **tippets** for mice and ribbons for mobs! For mice!” said the Tailor of Gloucester.



When the snowflakes came down against the small leaded windowpanes and shut out the light, the tailor had done his day's work; all the silk and satin lay cut out upon the table.

There were twelve pieces for the coat and four pieces for the waistcoat; and there were pocket flaps and cuffs, and buttons all in order. For the lining of the coat there was fine yellow taffeta; and for the buttonholes of the waistcoat, there was cherry-coloured **twist**. And everything was ready to sew together in the morning, all measured and sufficient—except that there was wanting just one single **skein** of cherry-coloured twisted silk.

The tailor came out of his shop at dark, for he did not sleep there at nights; he fastened the window and



locked the door, and took away the key. No one lived there at night but little brown mice, and they run in and out without any keys!

For behind the wooden **wainscots** of all the old houses in Gloucester, there are little mouse staircases and secret trapdoors; and the mice run from house to house through those long

narrow passages; they can run all over the town without going into the streets.

But the tailor came out of his shop, and shuffled home through the snow. He lived quite nearby in College Court, next the doorway to College Green; and although it was not a big house, the tailor was so poor he only rented the kitchen.



CHAPTER 2

He lived alone with his cat; it was called Simpkin.

Now all day long while the tailor was out at work, Simpkin kept house by himself; and he also was fond of the mice, though he gave them no satin for coats!

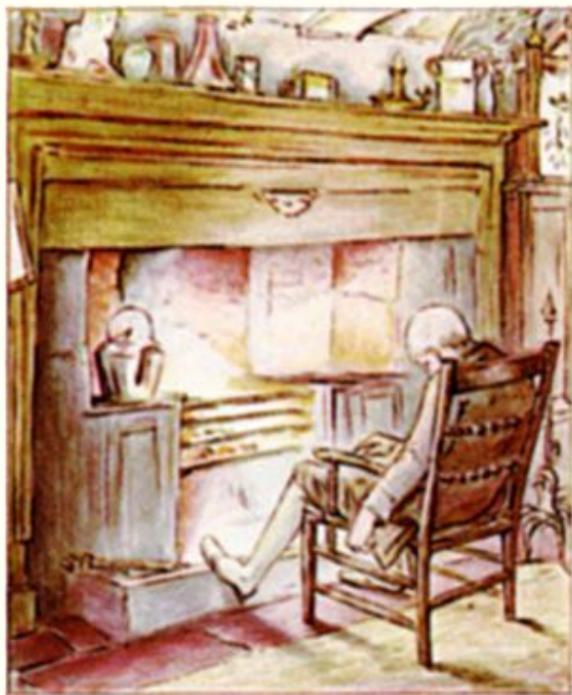
“Miaw?” said the cat when the tailor opened the door. “Miaw?”

The tailor replied—“Simpkin, we shall make our fortune, but I am worn to a **ravelling**. Take this **groat** (which is our last fourpence) and Simpkin, take a china **pipkin**; buy a penny worth of bread, a penny worth of milk and a penny worth of sausages. And oh, Simpkin, with the last penny of our

fourpence buy me one penny worth of cherry-coloured silk. But do not lose the last penny of the fourpence, Simpkin, or I am undone and worn to a thread-paper, for I have NO MORE TWIST."

Then Simpkin again said, "Miaw" and took the groat and the pipkin, and went out into the dark.





The tailor was very tired and beginning to be ill. He sat down by the hearth and talked to himself about that wonderful coat.

“I shall make my fortune—to be cut **bias**—the Mayor of Gloucester is to be married on Christmas Day in the morning, and he has ordered a coat and an embroidered waistcoat—to

be lined with yellow taffeta—there is just enough taffeta; there is no more left over in snippets than will serve to make tippets for mice—”

Then the tailor started; for suddenly, interrupting him, from the dresser at the other side of the kitchen came a number of little noises—

Tip tap, tip tap, tip tap tip!

“Now what can that be?” said the Tailor of Gloucester, jumping up from his chair. The dresser was covered with crockery and pipkins, willow pattern plates, and teacups and mugs.

The tailor crossed the kitchen, and stood quite still beside the dresser, listening, and peering through his spectacles. Again from under a teacup, came those funny little noises—

Tip tap, tip tap! Tip tap tip!

"This is very peculiar," said the Tailor of Gloucester; and he lifted up the teacup which was upside down.



Out stepped a little alive lady mouse,
and made a curtsey to the tailor! Then
she hopped away down off the dresser,
and under the wainscot.



The tailor sat down again by the fire,
warming his poor cold hands, and
mumbling to himself—

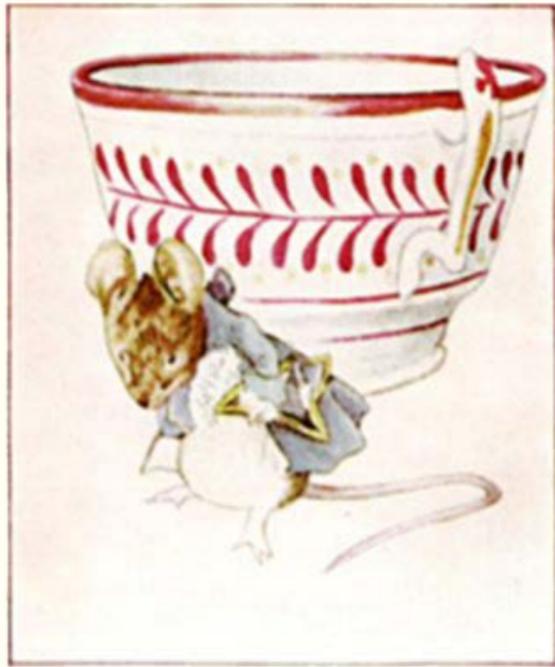
“The waistcoat is cut out from peach-coloured satin—**tambour** stitch and rosebuds in beautiful floss silk. Was I wise to entrust my last fourpence to Simpkin? One-and-twenty buttonholes of cherry-coloured twist!”

But all at once, from the dresser, there came other little noises:

Tip tap, tip tap, tip tap tip!

“This is passing extraordinary!” said the Tailor of Gloucester, and turned over another teacup, which was upside down.

Out stepped a little gentleman mouse, and made a bow to the tailor!



And then from all over the dresser
came a chorus of little tappings, all
sounding together, and answering one
another, like watch-beetles in an old
worm-eaten window-shutter—

Tip tap, tip tap, tip tap tip!

And out from under teacups and from
under bowls and basins, stepped other
and more little mice who hopped away
down off the dresser and under the
wainscot.



The tailor sat down, close over the fire, lamenting—"One-and-twenty buttonholes of cherry-coloured silk! To be finished by noon Saturday: and this is Tuesday evening. Was it right to let loose those mice, undoubtedly the property of Simpkin? Alack, I am undone, for I have no more twist!"

The little mice came out again, and listened to the tailor; they took notice of the pattern of that wonderful coat. They whispered to one another about the taffeta lining, and about little mouse tippets.

And then all at once they ran away together down the passage behind the wainscot, squeaking and calling to one another, as they ran from house to house; and not one mouse was left in the tailor's kitchen when Simpkin came back with the pipkin of milk!



Simpkin opened the door and bounced in, with an angry “G-r-r-miaw!” like a cat that is vexed. He hated the snow, and there was snow in his ears, and snow in his collar at the back of his neck. He put down the loaf and the sausages upon the dresser, and sniffed.

“Simpkin,” said the tailor, “where is my twist?”

But Simpkin set down the pipkin of milk upon the dresser, and looked

suspiciously at the teacups. He wanted his supper of little fat mouse!

“Simpkin,” said the tailor, “where is my TWIST?”

But Simpkin hid a little parcel privately in the teapot, and spit and growled at the tailor; and if Simpkin had been able to talk, he would have asked: “Where is my MOUSE?”

“Alack, I am undone!” said the Tailor of Gloucester, and went sadly to bed.



All that night long Simpkin hunted and searched through the kitchen, peeping into cupboards and under the wainscot, and into the teapot where he had hidden that twist; but still he never found a mouse!

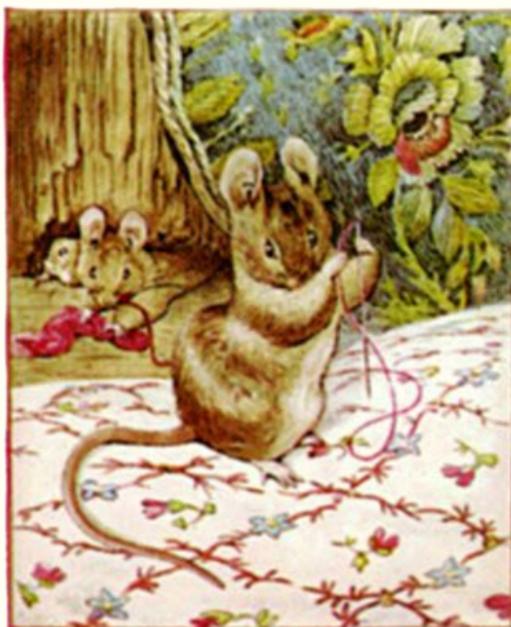
Whenever the tailor muttered and talked in his sleep, Simpkin said “Miaw-ger-r-w-s-s-ch!” and made strange horrid noises, as cats do at night.

The poor old tailor was very ill with a fever, tossing and turning in his four-post bed; and still in his dreams he mumbled—“No more twist! No more twist!”

All that day he was ill, and the next day, and the next; and what should become of the cherry-coloured coat?

In the tailor's shop in Westgate Street
the embroidered silk and satin lay cut
out upon the table—one-and-twenty
buttonholes—and who should come
to sew them, when the window was
barred, and the door was fast locked?

But that does not hinder the little
brown mice; they run in and out
without any keys through all the old
houses in Gloucester!



CHAPTER 3

Out of doors the market folks went trudging through the snow to buy their geese and turkeys, and to bake their Christmas pies; but there would be no Christmas dinner for Simpkin and the poor old Tailor of Gloucester.

The tailor lay ill for three days and nights; and then it was Christmas Eve, and very late at night. The moon climbed up over the roofs and chimneys, and looked down over the gateway into College Court. There were no lights in the windows, nor any sound in the houses; all the city of Gloucester was fast asleep under the snow.



And still Simpkin wanted his mice,
and he mewed as he stood beside the
four-post bed.

But it is in the old story that all the
beasts can talk, in the night between
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in
the morning (though there are very
few folk that can hear them, or know
what it is that they say).

When the Cathedral clock struck twelve there was an answer—like an echo of the chimes—and Simpkin heard it, and came out of the tailor's door, and wandered about in the snow.

From all the roofs and gables and old wooden houses in Gloucester came a thousand merry voices singing the old Christmas rhymes—all the old songs that ever I heard of, and some that I don't know, like Whittington's bells.

First and loudest the roosters cried out: “Dame, get up, and bake your pies!”

“Oh, dilly, dilly, dilly!” sighed Simpkin.

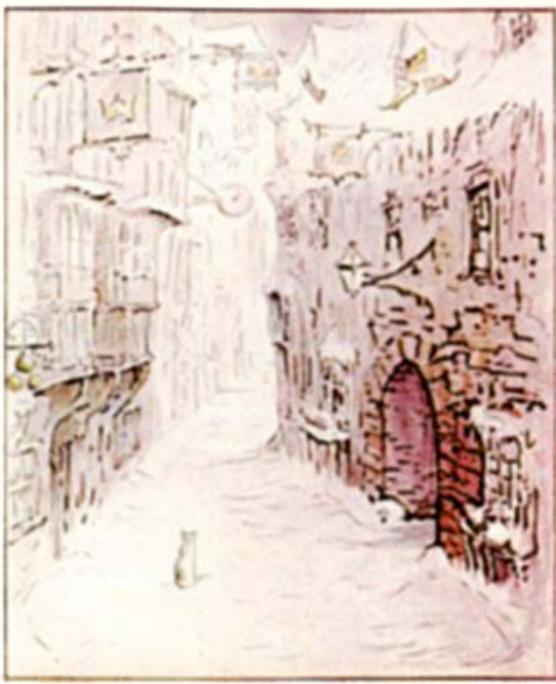
And now in a **garret** there were lights and sounds of dancing, and cats came from over the way.

“Hey, diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle! All the cats in Gloucester—

except me," said Simpkin.

Under the wooden eaves the starlings
and sparrows sang of Christmas
pies; the jack-daws woke up in the
Cathedral tower; and although it was
the middle of the night the throstles
and robins sang; the air was quite full
of little twittering tunes.





But it was all rather provoking to poor hungry Simpkin!

Particularly he was vexed with some little shrill voices from behind a wooden lattice. I think that they were bats, because they always have very small voices—especially in a black frost, when they talk in their sleep, like the Tailor of Gloucester.

They said something mysterious that sounded like—

“Buz, said the blue fly: hum, said the bee. Buz and hum they cry, and so do we!”

Simpkin went away shaking his ears as if he had a bee in his bonnet.



CHAPTER 4

From the tailor's shop in Westgate
came a glow of light; and when
Simpkin crept up to peep in at the
window it was full of candles. There
was a snippetting of scissors, and
snappeting of thread; and little mouse
voices sang loudly and gaily—

“Four-and-twenty tailors
Went to catch a snail,
The best man amongst them
Durst not touch her tail,
She put out her horns
Like a little kyloe cow,
Run, tailors, run! Or she'll have you
all e'en now!”

Then without a pause the little mouse
voices went on again—



“Sieve my lady’s oatmeal,
Grind my lady’s flour,
Put it in a chestnut,
Let it stand an hour—”

“Mew! Mew!” interrupted Simpkin,
and he scratched at the door. But the
key was under the tailor’s pillow, he
could not get in.

The little mice only laughed, and tried
another tune—

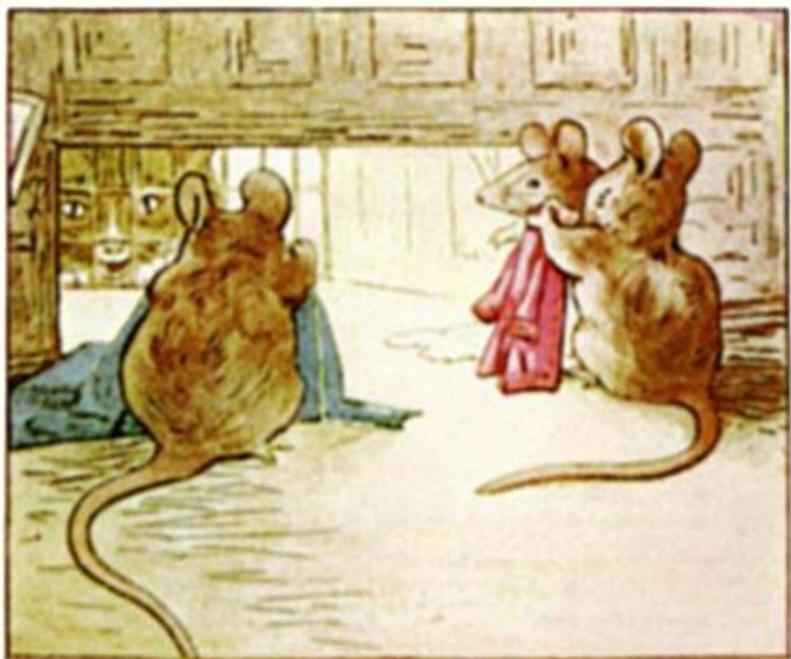
“Three little mice sat down to spin,
Kitty passed by and she peeped in.
What are you at, my fine little men?
Making coats for gentlemen.
Shall I come in and cut off your threads?
Oh, no, Miss Kitty, you’d bite off our
heads!”

“Mew! Mew!” cried Simpkin.

“Hey diddle dinketty?” answered the
little mice—

“Hey diddle dinketty, poppetty pet!
The merchants of London they wear
scarlet;
Silk in the collar, and gold in the hem,
So merrily march the merchantmen!”

They clicked their thimbles to mark
the time, but none of the songs pleased
Simpkin; he sniffed and mewed at the
door of the shop.



“And then I bought
A pipkin and a popkin,
A slipkin and a slopkin,
All for one farthing—
and upon the kitchen dresser!” added
the rude little mice.

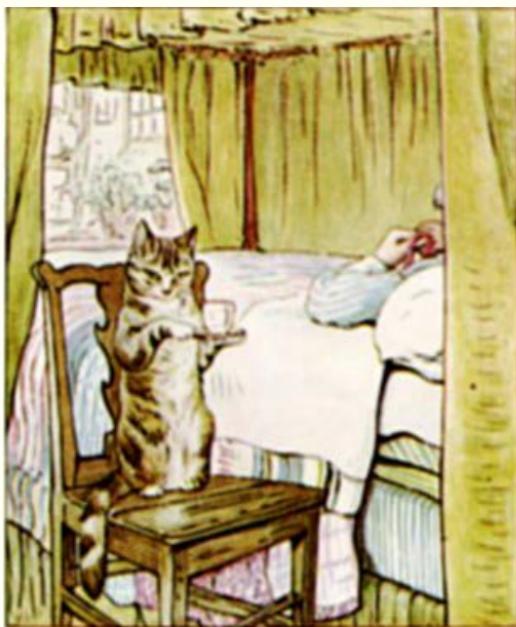
“Mew! Scratch! Scratch!” scuffled
Simpkin on the windowsill; while the
little mice inside sprang to their feet,

and all began to shout at once in little twittering voices: "No more twist! No more twist!" And they barred up the window shutters and shut out Simpkin.

But still through the nicks in the shutters he could hear the click of thimbles, and little mouse voices singing—

"No more twist! No more twist!"





Simpkin came away from the shop and went home, considering in his mind. He found the poor old tailor without fever, sleeping peacefully.

Then Simpkin went on tip-toe and took a little parcel of silk out of the teapot, and looked at it in the moonlight; and he felt quite ashamed of his badness compared with those good little mice!

When the tailor awoke in the morning, the first thing which he saw upon the patchwork quilt, was a skein of cherry-coloured twisted silk, and beside his bed stood the repentant Simpkin!

“Alack, I am worn to a ravelling,” said the Tailor of Gloucester, “but I have my twist!”

The sun was shining on the snow when the tailor got up and dressed, and came out into the street with Simpkin running before him.

The starlings whistled on the chimney stacks, and the throstles and robins sang—but they sang their own little noises, not the words they had sung in the night.

"Alack," said the tailor, "I have my twist; but no more strength—nor time—than will serve to make me one single buttonhole; for this is Christmas morning! The Mayor of Gloucester shall be married by noon—and where is his cherry-coloured coat?"



He unlocked the door of the little shop in Westgate Street, and Simpkin ran in, like a cat that expects something.

But there was no one there! Not even one little brown mouse!

The boards were swept clean; the little ends of thread and the little silk snippets were all tidied away, and gone from off the floor.

But upon the table—oh joy! The tailor gave a shout—there, where he had left plain cuttings of silk—there lay the most beautiful coat and embroidered satin waistcoat that ever were worn by a Mayor of Gloucester.

There were roses and pansies upon the facings of the coat; and the waistcoat was worked with poppies and corn-flowers.



Everything was finished except just
one single cherry-coloured buttonhole,
and where that buttonhole was
wanting there was pinned a scrap of
paper with these words—in little teeny
weeny writing—

NO MORE TWIST



And from then began the luck of the Tailor of Gloucester; he grew quite stout, and he grew quite rich.

He made the most wonderful waistcoats for all the rich merchants of Gloucester, and for all the fine gentlemen of the country round.

Never were seen such ruffles, or such embroidered cuffs and lappets! But his buttonholes were the greatest triumph of it all.

The stitches of those buttonholes were so neat—so neat—I wonder how they could be stitched by an old man in spectacles, with crooked old fingers, and a tailor's thimble.

The stitches of those buttonholes were so small—so small—they looked as if they had been made by little mice!



THE END

GLOSSARY

bias

to cut fabric diagonally

chenille

velvety cord of silk

garret

attic

groat

an English silver coin

lappets

a decorative flap on clothing

lutestring

a glossy silk fabric

nought

nothing

paduasoy

a rich silk fabric

periwigs

wigs worn by men hundreds of years ago

pipkin

a small earthenware pot

pompadour

a shade of pink

ravelling

a thread that is frayed or unravelling

skein

a length of thread

taffeta

silk fabric

tambour

an embroidery stitch

tippets

narrow pieces of cloth like scarves or stoles

twist

strong silk used on buttonholes

wainscot

wood panelling on the lower part of a wall



A poor tailor earns his living working in his freezing workshop during a very harsh English winter. He has a terribly important job to make a wedding coat and waistcoat for the Mayor of Gloucester. Feeling tired and unwell, the tailor runs out of food and thread, and precious time. How will he possibly complete the beautiful coat and embroidered waistcoat? Lucky for him, he has some very talented and kind creatures living in his dresser.

