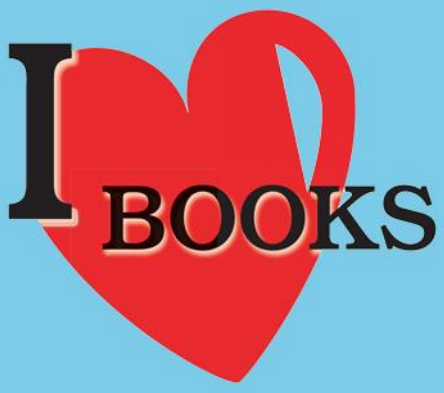


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Opening extract from

Elsie Piddock Skips in Her Sleep

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Elsie Piddock lived in Glynde under Caburn, where lots of other little girls lived too. They lived mostly on bread-and-butter, because their mothers were too poor to buy cake. As soon as Elsie began to hear, she heard the other little girls skipping every evening after school in the lane outside her mother's cottage.

Swish-swish! went the rope through the air. *Tappity-tap!* went the little girls' feet on the ground. *Mumble-umble-umble!* went the children's voices, saying a rhyme that the skipper could skip to.

In course of time, Elsie not only heard the sounds, but understood what they were all about, and then the mumble-umble turned itself into words like this:

"ANdy SPANdy SUGARdy CANdy,

FRENCH ALmond ROCK!

Breadandbutterforyoursupper's

allyourmother's

GOT!"

The second bit went twice as fast as the first bit, and when the little girls said it Elsie Piddock, munching her supper, always munched her mouthful of bread-and-butter in double-quick time. She wished she had some Sugardy-Candy-French-Almond-Rock to suck during the first bit, but she never had.

When Elsie Piddock was three years old, she asked her mother for a skipping-rope.

"You're too little," said her mother. "Bide a bit till you're a bigger girl, then you shall have one."

Elsie pouted, and said no more. But in the middle of the night her parents were wakened by something going *Slap-slap!* on the floor, and there was Elsie in her nightgown skipping with her father's braces.

She skipped till her feet caught in the tail of them, and she tumbled down and cried. But she had skipped ten times running first.

"Bless my buttons, mother!" said Mr Piddock. "The child's a born skipper."

And Mrs Piddock jumped out of bed full of pride, rubbed Elsie's elbows for her, and said: "There-a-there now! Dry your tears, and tomorrow you shall have a skip-rope all of your own."

So Elsie dried her eyes on the hem of her nightgown; and in the morning, before he went to work, Mr Piddock got a little cord, just the right length, and made two little wooden handles to go on the ends. With this Elsie skipped all day, scarcely stopping to eat her breakfast of bread-and-butter, and

her dinner of butter-and-bread.

And in the evening, when the schoolchildren were gathered in the lane, Elsie went out among them, and began to skip with the best.

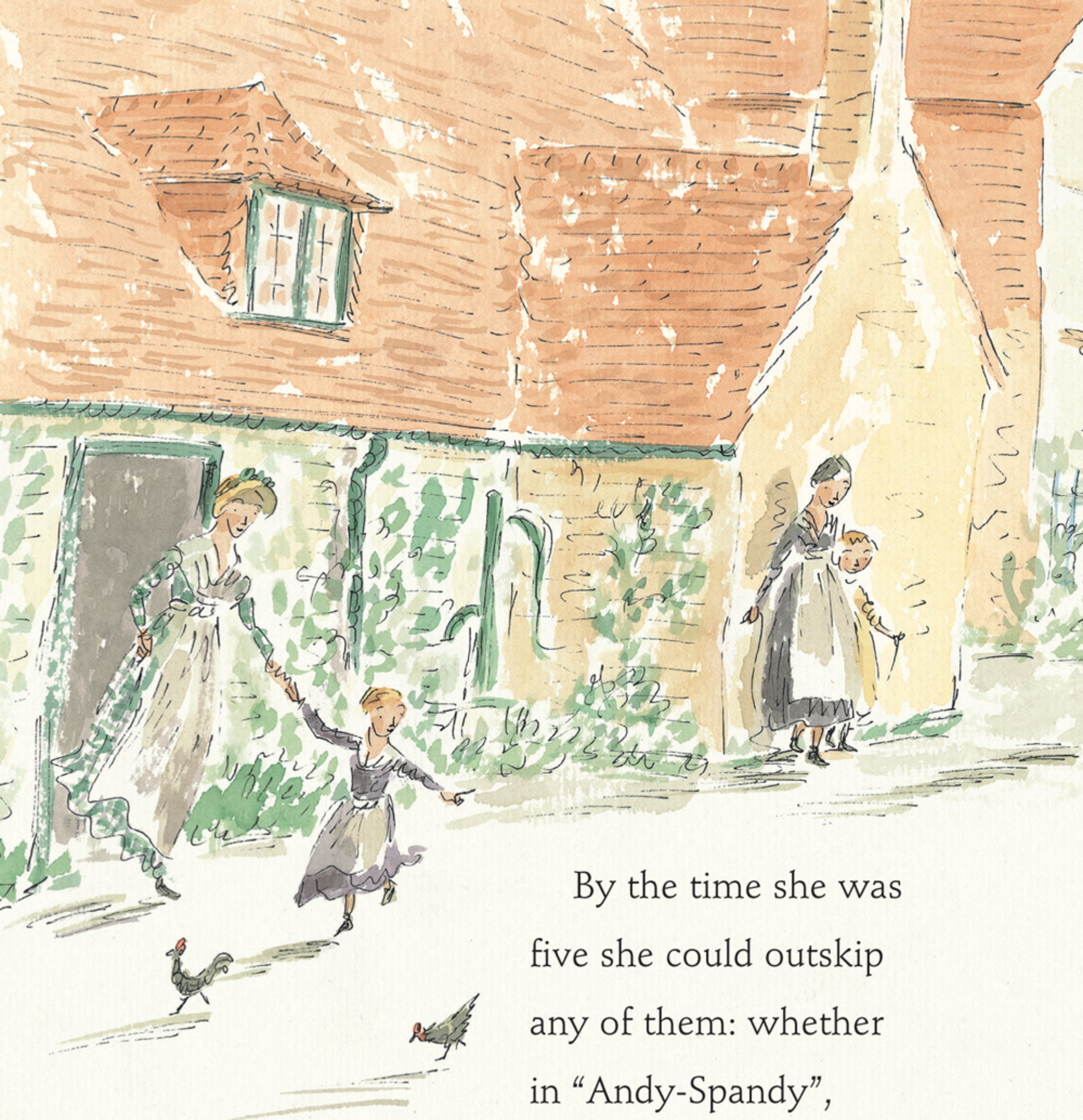
"Oh!" cried Joan Challon, who was the champion skipper of them all, "just look at little Elsie Piddock skipping as never so!"

All the skippers stopped to look, and then to wonder. Elsie Piddock certainly *did* skip as never so, and they called to their mothers to come and see. And the mothers in the lane came to their doors, and threw up their hands, and cried:

"Little Elsie Piddock

is a born skipper!"





By the time she was five she could outskip any of them: whether in "Andy-Spandy", "Lady, Lady, Drop your Purse", "Charley Parley Stole some Barley", or whichever of the games it might be.