

By and by grandmother came into the room.

“Mary,” she said, “here is some lace I got in England. Mother may put it on your dress.”

How happy Mary was! She danced for joy.

Mother put on the lace, and grandmother worked the buttonholes. How many do you suppose she worked? Why, she worked twelve!

When the dress was finished, it was just like Sue's. Only it was a great deal finer, for Mary's dress had three ruffles and Sue's had only two! And, then, there was the lace from England!

HOW MARY GOT A NEW DRESS



A Tale of the South



A LearningIsland.org
Tale of Old

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How Mary Got a New Dress/A Tale of the South

Summary: A tale showing how a dress was made in the early 1800s in the U.S.

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After the cloth had been woven, Aunt Dilsey took it out of the loom.

Then she bleached it until it was as white as snow. Now it was ready to be made into a dress.

“Mother, do tell me how you are going to make the dress,” said Mary. “Will it have ruffles on it like Sue's? Will it have trimming on it? And how many buttons will you put on it? Sue's dress has twelve. I know because I counted them.”

Mother did not answer all these questions; she just smiled as the scissors went snip, snip into the cloth. But she did cut out ruffles, and Aunt Maria began to hem them.

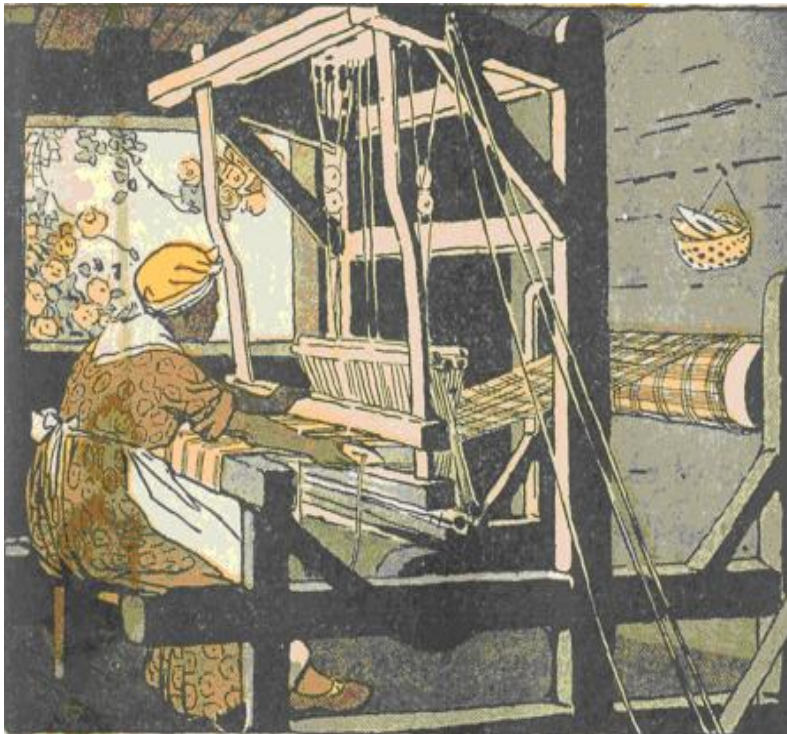


“And that means you, honey,” said Aunt Dilsey.

When the yarn was ready, Aunt Dilsey fastened it in the loom and began to weave. The threads went over and under, over and under.

As Aunt Dilsey wove, she hummed. Mary stood by and sang this song,

“Over and under and over we go,
Weaving the cotton as white as the snow,
Weaving the cloth for a dress, oh, ho!
As over and under and over we go.”



HOW MARY GOT A NEW DRESS

Mary lived a long time ago. She was a little girl when your great-great-grandmother was a little girl.

Mary lived in a big house in the south. Her parents grew cotton with the help of many slaves. There were field slaves and house slaves. Three of Mary’s favorite slaves were house slaves named Aunt Dinah, Aunt Chloe and Aunt Dilsey.

In those days, all cloth had to be made at home. Aunt Dinah, Aunt Chloe, and Aunt Dilsey were kept busy spinning and weaving to make clothes for the whole plantation.

One day Mary's mother said, "Aunt Dilsey, Mary needs a new dress, and I want you to weave some cloth at once. Can you weave some very fine cloth?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Aunt Dilsey. "I have some cotton I've been saving to make her a dress."

Aunt Dilsey got out the cotton. It was fine cotton that had been grown in the field behind the big house. The field slaves had planted the cotton and kept the field weeded.

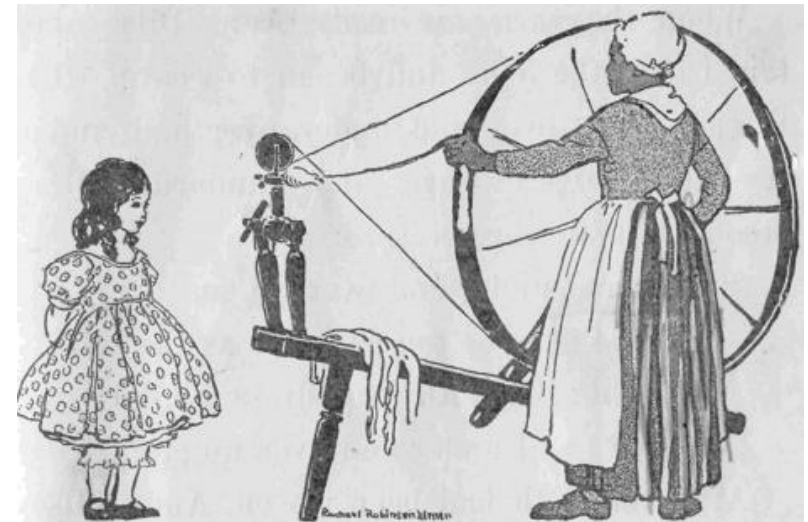
When the cotton plants had grown, their seeds burst open and the cotton balls came out. Then the field slaves picked the cotton. It was hard work picking cotton all day long in the hot sun.

Aunt Dilsey took the cotton and picked out all of the cotton seeds. It took a long time.

Then Aunt Dilsey got out the cards and carded the cotton smooth and fine. The cards were paddles made of wood. They had lots of stiff needles sticking up in them, like a very stiff brush.

Aunt Dilsey brushed the cotton back and forth, back and forth. Finally she had gotten all of the knots out of the cotton.

Then she fastened a roll of this cotton to the spindle and sent the wheel whirling around with a "Zum-m-m-m—Zum-m-m-m!"



Mary stood and watched the old woman.

"Aunt Dilsey," she said, "the spinning wheel sings a song, and I know what it says. Grandmother told me. It says,

'A hum and a whirl,
A twist and a twirl,
This is for the girl
With the golden curl!
Zum-m-m-m-m-m!
Zum-m-m-m-m-m!"