

**THE ADVENTURES OF
CHATTERER THE RED SQUIRREL**

Thornton W. Burgess

THE ADVENTURES OF CHATTERER THE RED SQUIRREL

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THORNTON W. BURGESS

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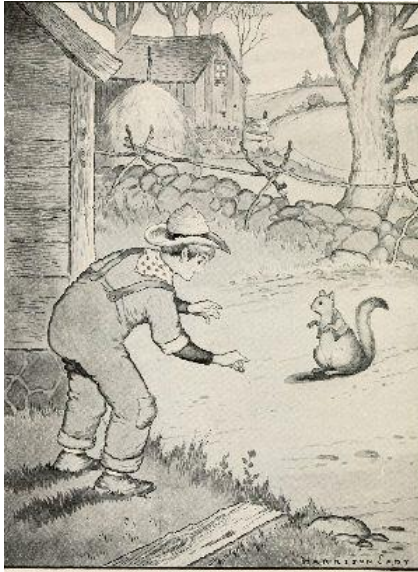
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It seemed as if that little voice inside had fairly shouted in his ears: "I am afraid." Frontispiece. [See Page 118.](#)

BURGESS QUADDIES (TRADE MARK)

The Bedtime Story-Books

THE ADVENTURES OF CHATTERER THE RED SQUIRREL

BY

THORNTON W. BURGESS

Author of "Old Mother West Wind," "The Adventures of Johnny Chuck," "Mother West Wind 'Why' Stories," etc.

With Illustrations by

HARRISON CADY



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IT SEEMED AS IF THAT LITTLE VOICE INSIDE HAD FAIRLY SHOUTED IN HIS EARS, "I AM AFRAID"

"WHAT'S THAT?" SAMMY JAY ASKED SHARPLY

"HAVE YOU FOUND A NEW HOME YET?" ASKED PETER

VERY CAUTIOUSLY CHATTERER PEEPED INSIDE THE HOLE

"YOU TELL CHATTERER THAT I'LL GET HIM YET!" SNARLED SHADOW

"I'D BE WILLING TO TRY IT IF IT WAS OF ANY USE. BUT IT ISN'T," SAID PRICKLY PORKY

THE ADVENTURES OF CHATTERER THE RED SQUIRREL

I

CHATTERER THE RED SQUIRREL RUNS FOR HIS LIFE

Chatterer the Red Squirrel had been scolding because there was no excitement. He had even tried to make some excitement by waking Bobby Coon and making him so angry that Bobby had threatened to eat him alive. It had been great fun to dance around and call Bobby names and make fun of him. Oh, yes, it had been great fun. You see, he knew all the time that Bobby couldn't catch him if he should try. But now things were different. Chatterer had all the excitement that he wanted. Indeed, he had more than he wanted. The truth is, Chatterer was running for his life, and he knew it.

It is a terrible thing, a very terrible thing to have to run for one's life. Peter Rabbit knows all about it. He has run for his life often. Sometimes it has been Reddy Fox behind him, sometimes Bowser the Hound, and once or twice Old Man Coyote. Peter has known that on his long legs his life has depended, and more than once a terrible fear has filled his heart. But Peter has also known that if he could reach the old stone wall or the dear Old Briar-patch first, he would be safe, and he always has reached it. So when he has been running with that terrible fear in his heart, there has always been hope there, too.

But Chatterer the Red Squirrel was running without hope. Yes, Sir, there was nothing but fear, terrible fear, in his heart, for he knew not where to go. The hollow tree or the holes in the old stone wall where he would be safe from any one else, even Farmer Brown's boy, offered him no safety now, for the one who was following him with hunger in his anger-red eyes

could go anywhere that he could go—could go into any hole big enough for him to squeeze into. You see, it was Shadow the Weasel from whom Chatterer was running, and Shadow is so slim that he can slip in and out of places that even Chatterer cannot get through.

Chatterer knew all this, and so, because it was of no use to run to his usual safe hiding places, he ran in just the other direction. He didn't know where he was going. He had just one thought: to run and run as long as he could and then, well, he would try to fight, though he knew it would be of no use.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" he sobbed, as he ran out on the branch of a tree and leaped across to the next tree, "I wish I had minded my own business! I wish I had kept my tongue still. Shadow the Weasel wouldn't have known where I was if he hadn't heard my voice. Oh, dear! oh, dear me! What can I do? What can I do?"

Now in his great fright Chatterer had run and jumped so hard that he was beginning to grow very tired. Presently he found that he must make a very long jump to reach the next tree. He had often made as long a jump as this and thought nothing of it, but now he was so tired that the distance looked twice as great as it really was. He didn't dare stop to run down the tree and scamper across. So he took a long breath, ran swiftly along the branch, and leaped. His hands just touched the tip of the nearest branch of the other tree. He tried his very best to hold on, but he couldn't. Then down, down, down he fell. He spread himself out as flat as he could, and that saved him a little, but still it was a dreadful fall, and when he landed, it seemed for just a minute as if all the breath was gone from his body. But it wasn't quite, and in another minute he was scrambling up the tree.

II

CHATTERER'S LAST CHANCE

Chatterer, still running for his life and without the least hope, suddenly saw a last chance to escape from Shadow the Weasel. That is, he saw something that might offer him a chance. He couldn't be sure until he had tried, and even then he might escape from one danger only to run right into another equally great. What Chatterer saw was a big brown bunch near the top of a tall chestnut-tree, and he headed for that tree as fast as ever he could go. What was that big brown bunch? Why it was Redtail the Hawk, who was dozing there with his head drawn down between his shoulders dreaming.

Now old Redtail is one of Chatterer's deadliest enemies. He is quite as fond of Red Squirrel as is Shadow the Weasel, though he doesn't often try to catch one, because there are other things to eat much easier to get. Chatterer had had more than one narrow escape from old Redtail and was very much afraid of him, yet here he was running up the very tree in which Redtail was sitting. You see, a very daring idea had come into his head. He had seen at once that Redtail was dozing and hadn't seen him at all. He knew that Redtail would just as soon have Shadow the Weasel for dinner as himself, and a very daring plan had popped into his head.

"I may as well be caught by Redtail as Shadow," he thought, as he ran up the tree, "but if my plan works out right, I won't be caught by either. Anyway, it is my very last chance."

Up the tree he scrambled, and after him went Shadow the Weasel. Shadow had been so intent on catching Chatterer that he had not noticed old Redtail, which was just as Chatterer had hoped. Up, up he scrambled, straight past old Redtail, but as he passed, he pulled one of Redtail's long tail feathers, and then ran on to the top of the tree, and with the last bit of strength he had left, leaped to a neighboring spruce-tree where, hidden by the thick branches, he stopped to rest and see what would happen.

Of course, when he felt his tail pulled, old Redtail was wide awake in a flash; and of course he looked down to see who had dared to pull his tail. There just below him was Shadow the Weasel, who had just that minute discovered who was sitting there. Old Redtail hissed sharply, and the feathers on the top of his head stood up in a way they do when he is angry. And he was angry—very angry.

Shadow the Weasel stopped short. Then, like a flash, he dodged around to the other side of the tree. He had no thought of Chatterer now. Things were changed all in an instant, quite changed. Instead of the hunter, he was now the hunted. Old Redtail circled in the air just overhead, and every time he caught sight of Shadow, he swooped at him with great, cruel claws spread to clutch him. Shadow dodged around the trunk of the tree. He was more angry than frightened, for his sharp eyes had spied a little hollow in a branch of the chestnut-tree, and he knew that once inside of that, he would have nothing to fear. But he was angry clear through to think that he should be cheated out of that dinner he had been so sure of only a few minutes before. So he screeched angrily at old Redtail and then, watching his chance, scampered out to the hollow and whisked inside, just in the nick of time.

Chatterer, watching from the spruce-tree, gave a great sigh of relief. He saw Redtail the Hawk post himself on the top of a tall tree where he could keep watch of that hollow in which Shadow had disappeared, and he knew that it would be a long time before Shadow would dare poke even his nose outside. Then, as soon as he was rested, Chatterer stole softly, oh, so softly, away through the tree-tops until he was sure that Redtail could not see him. Then he hurried. He wanted to get just as far away from Shadow the Weasel as he could.

III

CHATTERER TELLS SAMMY JAY ABOUT SHADOW THE WEASEL

Chatterer hurried through the Green Forest. He didn't know just where he was going. He had but one thought, and that was to get as far away from Shadow the Weasel as he could. It made him have cold shivers all over every time he thought of Shadow.

"Seems to me you are in a great hurry," said a voice from a pine-tree he was passing.

Chatterer knew that voice without looking to see who was speaking. Everybody in the Green Forest knows that voice. It was the voice of Sammy Jay.

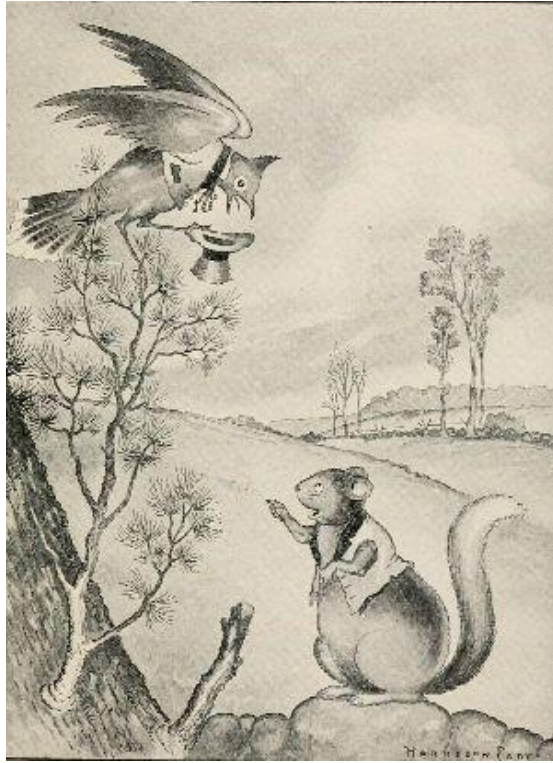
"It looks to me as if you were running away from some one," jeered Sammy.

Chatterer wanted to stop and pick a quarrel with Sammy, as he usually did when they met, but the fear of Shadow the Weasel was still upon him.

"I—I—am," he said in a very low voice.

Sammy looked as if he thought he hadn't heard right. Never before had he known Chatterer to admit that he was afraid, for you know Chatterer is a great boaster. It must be something very serious to frighten Chatterer like that.

"What's that?" Sammy asked sharply. "I always knew you to be a coward, but this is the first time I have ever known you to admit it. Who are you running away from?"



"What's that?" Sammy asked sharply.

"Shadow the Weasel," replied Chatterer, still in a very low voice, as if he were afraid of being overheard. "Shadow the Weasel is back in the Green Forest, and I have just had such a narrow escape!"

"Ho!" cried Sammy, "this is important. I thought Shadow was up in the Old Pasture. If he has come back to the Green Forest, folks ought to know it. Where is he now?"

Chatterer stopped and told Sammy all about his narrow escape and how he had left Shadow the Weasel in a hollow of a chestnut-tree with Redtail the Hawk watching for him to come out. Sammy's eyes sparkled when Chatterer told how he had pulled the tail of old Redtail. "And he doesn't know now who did it; he thinks it was Shadow," concluded Chatterer, with a weak little grin.

"Ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Sammy Jay. "I wish I had been there to see it."

Then he suddenly grew grave. "Other folks certainly ought to know that Shadow is back in the Green Forest," said he, "so that they may be on their guard. Then if they get caught, it is their own fault. I think I'll go spread the news." You see, for all his mean ways, Sammy Jay does have some good in him, just as everybody does, and he dearly loves to tell important news.

"I—I wish you would go first of all and tell my cousin, Happy Jack the Gray Squirrel," said Chatterer, speaking in a hesitating way.

Sammy Jay leaned over and looked at Chatterer sharply. "I thought you and Happy Jack were not friends," said he. "You always seem to be quarreling."

Chatterer looked a little confused, but he is very quick with his tongue, is Chatterer. "That's just it," he replied quickly. "That's just it! If anything should happen to Happy Jack, I wouldn't have him to quarrel with, and it is such fun to see him get mad!"

Now of course the real reason why Chatterer wanted Happy Jack warned was because down inside he was ashamed of a dreadful thought that had come to him of leading Shadow the Weasel to Happy Jack's house, so that he himself might escape. It had been a dreadful thought, a cowardly thought, and Chatterer had been really ashamed that he should have ever had such a thought. He thought now that if he could do something for Happy Jack, he would feel better about it.

Sammy Jay promised to go straight to Happy Jack and warn him that Shadow the Weasel was back in the Green Forest, and off he started, screaming the news as he flew, so that all the little people in the Green Forest might know. Chatterer listened a few minutes and then started on.

"Where shall I go?" he muttered. "Where shall I go? I don't dare stay in the Green Forest, for now Shadow will never rest until he catches me."

IV

CHATTERER LEAVES THE GREEN FOREST

Chatterer was in a peck of trouble. Yes, Sir, he was in a peck of trouble. There was no doubt about it. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear! If only I had kept my tongue still! If only I had kept my tongue still!" he kept saying over and over to himself, as he hurried through the Green Forest. You see, Chatterer was just beginning to realize what a lot of trouble an unruly tongue can get one into. Here it was cold weather, the very edge of winter, and Chatterer didn't dare stay in the Green Forest where he had always made his home. His storehouses were full of nuts and seeds and corn, enough and more than enough to keep him in comfort all winter, and now he must turn his back on them and go he didn't know where, and all because of his mean disposition and bad tongue.

If he hadn't called Bobby Coon names that morning at the top of his voice, Shadow the Weasel might not have found him. He knew that Shadow has a long memory, and that he would never forget the trick by which Chatterer had escaped, and so the only way Chatterer would ever be able to have a moment's peace would be to leave the Green Forest for as long as Shadow the Weasel chose to stay there. Chatterer shivered inside his warm, red fur coat as he thought of the long, cold winter and how hard it would be to find enough to eat. Was ever any one else in such a dreadful fix?

Presently he came to the edge of the Green Forest. He sat down to rest in the top of a tree where he could look off over the Green Meadows. Far, far away he could see the Purple Hills, behind which jolly, round, red Mr. Sun goes to bed every night. He could see the old stone wall that separates Farmer Brown's cornfield from the Green Meadows. He could see Farmer Brown's house and barn and near them the Old Orchard where Johnny Chuck had spent the summer with Polly Chuck and their baby Chucks. He knew every nook and corner in the old stone wall and many times he had been to the Old Orchard. It was there that he had stolen the eggs of

Drummer the Woodpecker. He grinned at the thought of those eggs and how he had stolen them, and then he shivered as he remembered how he had finally been caught and how sharp the bills of Drummer and Mrs. Drummer were.

But all that was in the past, and thinking about it wasn't going to help him now. He had got to do something right away. Perhaps he might find a place to live in the old stone wall, and there might, there just might, be enough grains of corn scattered over the ground of the cornfield for him to lay up a supply, if he worked very hard and fast. Anyway, he would have a look. So he hurried down from the tree and out along the old stone wall. His spirits began to rise as he whisked along, peering into every hole and jumping from stone to stone. It really seemed as though he might find a snug home somewhere here. Then he remembered something that made his heart sink again. He remembered having seen Shadow the Weasel more than once exploring that very wall. Just as likely as not he would do it again, for it was so very near the Green Forest. No, the old stone wall wouldn't do.

Just then along came Peter Rabbit. Peter saw right away that something was wrong with Chatterer, and he wanted to know what it was. Chatterer told him. He felt that he had just got to tell some one. Peter looked thoughtful. He scratched his long left ear with his long right hind foot.

"You know there is another old stone wall up there by the Old Orchard," said he. "It is pretty near Farmer Brown's house, and Black Pussy hunts there a great deal, but you ought to be smart enough to keep out of her clutches."

"I should hope so!" exclaimed Chatterer scornfully. "I have never seen a cat yet that I was afraid of! believe I'll go over and have a look at that old wall, Peter Rabbit."

"I'll go with you," said Peter, and off they started together.

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