

***The
Adventures
of
DANNY
MEADOW MOUSE***

by Thornton W. Burgess

The Adventures of Danny Meadow Mouse

By THORNTON W. BURGESS

Illustrated by HARRISON CADY



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The Adventures of Danny Meadow Mouse



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Illustrations

All Danny Meadow Mouse could think about was his short tail

“Got plenty to eat and drink, haven't you?” continued Mr. Toad

Danny popped his head out of another little doorway and laughed at Reddy

Granny didn't finish, but licked her chops and smacked her lips

It was a beautiful white world, a very beautiful white world

Over in the Green Forest Hooty the Owl had had poor hunting

Danny was being carried through the air in the cruel claws of Hooty the Owl!

“I tell you what, you stay right here!” said Peter

All around the trunk of the tree was wrapped wire netting

Danny Meadow Mouse had set out to gnaw that piece of stake all to splinters

“Where?” exclaimed old Mr. Toad, turning as pale as a toad can turn

“Why, Mr. Toad, where are you going in such a hurry?” asked Danny

With a frightened squeak, Danny dived into the opening just in time

Like a flash, Danny dodged into a tangle of barbed wire

The Adventures of Danny Meadow Mouse



All Danny Meadow Mouse could think about was his short tail

I

Danny Meadow Mouse Is Worried

DANNY MEADOW MOUSE sat on his doorstep with his chin in his hands, and it was very plain to see that Danny had something on his mind. He had only a nod for Jimmy Skunk, and even Peter Rabbit could get no more than a grumpy “Good morning.” It wasn't that he had been caught napping the day before by Reddy Fox and nearly made an end of. No, it wasn't that. Danny had learned his lesson, and Reddy would never catch him again. It wasn't that he was all alone with no one to play with. Danny was rather glad that he was alone. The fact is, Danny Meadow Mouse was worried.

Now worry is one of the worst things in the world, and it didn't seem as if there was anything that Danny Meadow Mouse need worry about. But you know it is the easiest thing in the world to find something to worry over and make yourself uncomfortable about. And when you make yourself uncomfortable, you are almost sure to make everyone around you equally uncomfortable. It was so with Danny Meadow Mouse. Striped Chipmunk had twice called him “Cross Patch” that morning, and Johnny Chuck, who had fought Reddy Fox for him the day before, had called him “Grumpy.” And what do you think was the matter with Danny Meadow Mouse? Why, he was worrying because his tail was short. Yes, Sir, that is all that ailed Danny Meadow Mouse that bright morning.

You know, some people let their looks make them miserable. They worry because they are homely or freckled, or short or tall, or thin or stout, all of which is very foolish. And Danny Meadow Mouse was just as foolish in worrying because his tail was short.

It is short! It certainly is all of that! Danny never had realized how short until he chanced to meet his cousin Whitefoot, who lives in the Green Forest. He was very elegantly dressed, but the most imposing thing about

him was his long, slim, beautiful tail. Danny had at once become conscious of his own stubby little tail, and he had hardly had pride enough to hold his head up as became an honest Meadow Mouse. Ever since, he had been thinking and thinking, and wondering how his family came to have such short tails. Then he grew envious and began to wish and wish and wish that he could have a long tail like his cousin Whitefoot.

He was so busy wishing that he had a long tail that he quite forgot to take care of the tail he did have, and he pretty nearly lost it and his life with it. Old Whitetail the Marsh Hawk spied Danny sitting there moping on his doorstep, and came sailing over the tops of the meadow grasses so softly that he all but caught Danny. If it hadn't been for one of the Merry Little Breezes, Danny would have been caught. And all because he was envious. It's a bad, bad habit.



II

Danny Meadow Mouse and His Short Tail

ALL Danny Meadow Mouse could think about was his short tail. He was so ashamed of it that whenever anyone passed, he crawled out of sight so that they should not see how short his tail was. Instead of playing in the sunshine as he used to do, he sat and sulked. Pretty soon his friends began to pass without stopping. Finally one day old Mr. Toad sat down in front of Danny and began to ask questions.

“What’s the matter?” asked old Mr. Toad.

“Nothing,” replied Danny Meadow Mouse.

“I don’t suppose there really is anything the matter, but what do you think is the matter?” said old Mr. Toad.

Danny fidgeted, and old Mr. Toad looked up at jolly, round, red Mr. Sun and winked. “Sun is just as bright as ever, isn’t it?” he inquired.

“Yes,” said Danny.

“Got plenty to eat and drink, haven’t you?” continued Mr. Toad.



“Got plenty to eat and drink, haven't you?” continued Mr. Toad

“Yes,” said Danny.

“Seems to me that that is a pretty good-looking suit of clothes you're wearing,” said Mr. Toad, eyeing Danny critically. “Sunny weather, plenty to eat and drink, and good clothes—must be you don't know when you're well off, Danny Meadow Mouse.”

Danny hung his head. Finally he looked up and caught a kindly twinkle in old Mr. Toad's eyes. “Mr. Toad, how can I get a long tail like my cousin Whitefoot of the Green Forest?” he asked.

“So that's what's the matter! Ha! ha! ha! Danny Meadow Mouse, I'm ashamed of you! I certainly am ashamed of you!” said Mr. Toad. “What good would a long tail do you? Tell me that.”

For a minute Danny didn't know just what to say. "I—I—I'd look so much better if I had a long tail," he ventured.

Old Mr. Toad just laughed. "You never saw a Meadow Mouse with a long tail, did you? Of course not. What a sight it would be! Why, everybody on the Green Meadows would laugh themselves sick at the sight! You see, you need to be slim and trim and handsome to carry a long tail well. And then what a nuisance it would be! You would always have to be thinking of your tail and taking care to keep it out of harm's way. Look at me. I'm homely. Some folks call me ugly to look at. But no one tries to catch me as Farmer Brown's boy does Billy Mink because of his fine coat; and no one wants to put me in a cage because of a fine voice. I am satisfied to be just as I am, and if you'll take my advice, Danny Meadow Mouse, you'll be satisfied to be just as you are."

"Perhaps you are right," said Danny Meadow Mouse after a little. "I'll try."

III

Danny Meadow

Mouse Plays Hide-and-Seek

LIFE is always a game of hide-and-peek to Danny Meadow Mouse. You see, he is such a fat little fellow that there are a great many other furry-coated people, and almost as many who wear feathers, who would gobble Danny up for breakfast or for dinner if they could. Some of them pretend to be his friends, but Danny always keeps his eyes open when they are around and always begins to play hide-and-peek. Peter Rabbit and Jimmy Skunk and Striped Chipmunk and Happy Jack Squirrel are all friends whom he can trust, but he always has a bright twinkling eye open for Reddy Fox and Billy Mink and Shadow the Weasel and old Whitetail the Marsh Hawk, and several more, especially Hooty the Owl at night.

Now Danny Meadow Mouse is a stouthearted little fellow, and when rough Brother North Wind came shouting across the Green Meadows, tearing to pieces the snow clouds and shaking out the snowflakes until they covered the Green Meadows deep, deep, deep, Danny just snuggled down in his warm coat in his snug little house of grass and waited. Danny liked the snow. Yes, Sir, Danny Meadow Mouse liked the snow. He just loved to dig in it and make tunnels. Through those tunnels in every direction he could go where he pleased and when he pleased without being seen by anybody. It was great fun!

Every little way he made a little round doorway up beside a stiff stalk of grass. Out of this he could peep at the white world, and he could get the fresh, cold air. Sometimes, when he was quite sure that no one was around, he would scamper across on top of the snow from one doorway to another, and when he did this, he made the prettiest little footprints.

Now Reddy Fox knew all about those doorways and who made them. Reddy was having hard work to get enough to eat this cold weather, and he was hungry most of the time. One morning, as he came tiptoeing softly

over the meadows, what should he see just ahead of him but the head of Danny Meadow Mouse pop out of one of those little round doorways! Reddy's mouth watered, and he stole forward more softly than ever. When he got within jumping distance, he drew his stout hind legs under him and made ready to spring. Presto! Danny Meadow Mouse had disappeared! Reddy Fox jumped just the same and began to dig as fast as he could make his paws go. He could smell Danny Meadow Mouse and that made him almost frantic.

All the time Danny Meadow Mouse was scurrying along one of his little tunnels, and when finally Reddy Fox stopped digging because he was quite out of breath, Danny popped his head out of another little doorway and laughed at Reddy. Of course Reddy saw him, and of course Reddy tried to catch him there, and dug frantically just as before. And of course Danny Meadow Mouse wasn't there.



Danny popped his head out of another little doorway and laughed at Reddy

After a while Reddy Fox grew tired of this kind of a game and tried another plan. The next time he saw Danny Meadow Mouse stick his head out, Reddy pretended not to see him. He stretched himself out on the ground and made believe that he was very tired and sleepy. He closed his eyes. Then he opened them just the tiniest bit, so that he could see Danny Meadow Mouse and yet seem to be asleep. Danny watched him for a long time. Then he chuckled to himself and dropped out of sight.

No sooner was he gone than Reddy Fox stole over close to the little doorway and waited. "He'll surely stick his head out again to see if I'm asleep, and then I'll have him," said Reddy to himself. So he waited and waited and waited. By and by he turned his head. There was Danny Meadow Mouse at another little doorway, laughing at him!

IV

Old Granny Fox Tries for Danny Meadow Mouse

DANNY MEADOW MOUSE had not enjoyed anything so much for a long time as he did that game of hide-and-seek. He tickled and chuckled all the afternoon as he thought about it. Of course, Reddy had been “it.” He had been “it” all the time, for never once had he caught Danny Meadow Mouse. If he had—well, there wouldn't have been any more stories about Danny Meadow Mouse, because there wouldn't have been any Danny Meadow Mouse any more.

But Danny never let himself think about this. He had enjoyed the game all the more because it had been such a dangerous game. It had been such fun to dive into one of his little round doorways in the snow, run along one of his own little tunnels, and then peep out at another doorway and watch Reddy Fox digging as fast as ever he could at the doorway Danny had just left. Finally Reddy had given up in disgust and gone off muttering angrily to try to find something else for dinner. Danny had sat up on the snow and watched him go. In his funny little squeaky voice Danny shouted:

*“Though Reddy Fox is smart and sly,
Hi-hum-diddle-de-o!
I'm just as smart and twice as spry.
Hi-hum-diddle-de-o!”*

That night Reddy Fox told old Granny Fox all about how he had tried to catch Danny Meadow Mouse. Granny listened with her head cocked on one side. When Reddy told how fat Danny Meadow Mouse was, her mouth watered. You see, now that snow covered the Green Meadows and the Green Forest, Granny and Reddy Fox had hard work to get enough to eat, and they were hungry most of the time.

“I'll go with you down on the meadows tomorrow morning, and then we'll see if Danny Meadow Mouse is as smart as he thinks he is,” said Granny Fox.

So, bright and early the next morning, old Granny Fox and Reddy Fox went down on the meadows where Danny Meadow Mouse lives. Danny had felt in his bones that Reddy would come back, so he was watching, and he saw them as soon as they came out of the Green Forest. When he saw old Granny Fox, Danny's heart beat a little faster than before, for he knew that Granny Fox is very smart and very wise, and has learned most of the tricks of all the other little meadow and forest people.

“This is going to be a more exciting game than the other,” said Danny to himself, and scurried down out of sight to see that all his little tunnels were clear so that he could run fast through them if he had to. Then he peeped out of one of his little doorways hidden in a clump of tall grass.

Old Granny Fox set Reddy to hunting for Danny's little round doorways, and as fast as he found them, Granny came up and sniffed at each. She knew that she could tell by the smell which one he had been at last. Finally she came straight toward the tall bunch of grass. Danny ducked down and scurried along one of his little tunnels. He heard Granny Fox sniff at the doorway he had just left. Suddenly something plunged down through the snow right at his very heels. Danny didn't have to look to know that it was Granny Fox herself, and he squeaked with fright.

V

What Happened on the Green Meadows

THICK and fast, things were happening to Danny Meadow Mouse down on the snow-covered Green Meadows. Rather, they were almost happening. He hadn't minded when Reddy Fox all alone tried to catch him. Indeed, he had made a regular game of hide-and-seek of it and had enjoyed it immensely. But now it was different. Granny Fox wasn't so easily fooled as Reddy Fox. Just Granny alone would have made the game dangerous for Danny Meadow Mouse. But Reddy was with her, and so Danny had two to look out for, and he got so many frights that it seemed to him as if his heart had moved right up into his mouth and was going to stay there. Yes, Sir, that is just how it seemed.

Down in his little tunnels underneath the snow Danny Meadow Mouse felt perfectly safe from Reddy Fox, who would stop and dig frantically at the little round doorway where he had last seen Danny. But old Granny Fox knew all about those little tunnels, and she didn't waste any time digging at the doorways. Instead she cocked her sharp little ears and listened with all her might. Now Granny Fox has very keen ears, oh, very keen ears, and she heard just what she hoped she would hear. She heard Danny Meadow Mouse running along one of his little tunnels under the snow.

Plunge! Old Granny Fox dived right into the snow and right through into the tunnel of Danny Meadow Mouse. Her two black paws actually touched Danny's tail. He was glad then that it was no longer.

"Ha!" cried Granny Fox, "I almost got him that time!"

Then she ran ahead a little way over the snow, listening as before. Plunge! Into the snow she went again. It was lucky for him that Danny had just turned into another tunnel, for otherwise she would surely have caught him.

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