

THE TALE OF TOMMY FOX

CHAPTER 16: TOMMY BECOMES BOASTFUL



BY ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY



When Johnnie Green turned Tommy Fox loose, out in the meadow, in the moonlight, Tommy hurried across the fields as fast as he could go. You remember that he heard a fox barking, near the foot of Blue Mountain, and he thought it sounded like his mother. So Tommy barked, too. And as he ran he could hear that other fox coming towards him. Pretty soon they met, and such a joyful meeting you never saw in all your life. For it was old Mrs. Fox. And she was so delighted to see Tommy that she licked him all over with her tongue, and looked at him carefully, to see if he was hurt anywhere. Mrs. Fox had never expected to see Tommy again. But there he was, bigger than ever, and altogether too fat, for Johnnie had fed him well; and then, there were those two hens that Tommy had stolen.

Tommy Fox was very glad indeed to see his mother once more. He frisked about her, and yelped, and jumped up and down. And when she saw that Tommy had come back safe and sound Mrs. Fox danced a little bit, too. And then she took Tommy home.

You remember that when Farmer Green caught Tommy in a trap, right at the door of his mother's house, Mrs. Fox had been obliged to move. Her new home was not far away from the old one. It was snug and cozy, and on the whole was a pretty nice sort of house, though the dooryard was not quite so

sunny as she would have preferred, for the branches of a big tree shaded it.

Tommy had to answer a great many questions. His mother wanted to know everything that had happened to him. She was astonished when she found that he had been in the village, right in the daytime. He was the only fox she knew of who had ever been there. And when she heard of Tommy's friendship with the dog Spot Mrs. Fox was more surprised than ever. She couldn't understand it. And she shook her head over and over again as Tommy told her what good times he and Spot had had together. Mrs. Fox actually began to think that Tommy was telling stories.

The other forest-people, too, thought that Tommy was fibbing when he bragged about his strange adventures. And old Mr. Crow began to cry "Stop, liar!" after him, instead of "Stop, thief!" as he used to do.

But Tommy Fox didn't mind that very much. He knew that he was telling the truth. And he more than half guessed that old Mr. Crow was jealous of him, because he had so many wonderful things to tell.

Though the forest-people always listened to Tommy's stories, they disliked him more than ever. For he was always going about boasting of what he had seen, and what he had done, and what his friend, the dog Spot, said.

"If you're such good friends with old dog Spot, why don't you go down to the farm-yard

and see him?" Mr. Crow said to Tommy one day. This was long after Tommy had come back to live with his mother. In fact, it was quite late in the fall, and the weather was growing cold.

"All right! I will!" Tommy said. He was not going to let old Mr. Crow get the better of him. "I'll go now," Tommy said. And with that he started down the valley toward Farmer Green's buildings.