

*The Tale of Brownie Beaver*  
CHAPTER 5: BROWNIE SAVES THE DAM

*by Arthur Scott Bailey*



Brownie Beaver was always glad that he had taken Granddaddy's advice about the freshet. And Brownie's neighbors were glad that he had, too. For that was really the only thing that saved the village from being carried away by the flood of water that swept down upon the pond, after it had rained for two days and two nights.

The pond rose so quickly and the water rushed past so fast that people had to scramble out of their houses and begin working on them, to keep them from being washed away.

That rush of water meant only one thing. The pond was full and running over! And just as likely as not the dam would be carried away—the dam on which Granddaddy Beaver had worked when he was a youngster, and on which his own granddaddy had worked before him. It would take years and years to build another such dam as that.

Now, with almost everybody working on his own house, there was almost no one left to work upon the dam. But people never stopped to think about that. They never once remembered that out of the whole village old Granddaddy and Brownie Beaver were the only persons whose houses had been made ready for the freshet and that those two were the only people with nothing to do at home.

“There'll be plenty to help save the dam,” everybody said to himself. “I'll just work on my house.”

Now, Brownie Beaver knew that there was nothing more he could do to make his house safe, so he swam over to the dam, expecting to find a good many of



his neighbors there. But old Granddaddy Beaver was the only other person he found. And he seemed worried.

“It’s a great pity!” he said to Brownie. “Here’s this fine dam, which has taken so many years to build, and it’s a-going to be washed away—you mark my words!”

“What makes you think that?” asked Brownie.

“There’s nobody here to do anything,” said Granddaddy Beaver. “The spillways of this dam ought to be made as big as possible, to let the freshet pass through. But I can’t do it, for I can’t swim as well as I could once.”


Brownie Beaver looked at the rushing water which poured over the top of the dam in a hundred places and was already carrying off mud and sticks, eating the dam away before his very eyes.

“I’ll save the dam!” he cried. “You?” Granddaddy Beaver exclaimed. “Why, what do you think you can do?” Being so old, he couldn’t help believing that other people were too young to do difficult things.

“Watch me and I’ll show you!” Brownie Beaver told him. And without saying another word he swam to the nearest spillway and began making it bigger.

Sometimes he had to fight the freshet madly, to keep from being swept over the dam himself. Sometimes, too, as he stood on the dam it crumbled beneath him and he found himself swimming again.

How many narrow escapes he had that day Brownie Beaver could never remember. When they happened, he didn’t have time to count them, he was working so busily. And if old Granddaddy Beaver hadn’t told everyone after-



ward, how Brownie saved the great dam from being swept away, and how hard he had worked, and how he had swum fearlessly into the torrent, people wouldn't have known anything about it.

To be sure, they had noticed that the water went down almost as suddenly as it rose. But they hadn't stopped to think that there must have been some reason for that. And when they learned that Brownie Beaver was the reason, the whole village gave him a vote of thanks.

They wanted to give him a gold-headed cane, too. But they were unable to find one anywhere.

When Brownie Beaver heard of that he said it was just as well, because he seldom walked far on land and there wasn't much use in a person's carrying a cane when he swam, anyhow. Although it was sometimes done, he had always considered it a silly practice—and one that he would not care to follow.