

THE TALE OF TOMMY FOX

CHAPTER 8: SOMETHING MAKES TOMMY VERY PROUD



BY ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY



Tommy Fox could think of nothing but Mr. Woodchuck. He thought there could be no use in going back to the hole beneath the big oak in the pasture until the next day, because Mr. Woodchuck would probably be afraid that Tommy was waiting for him to come out. Yes—Tommy decided that Mr. Woodchuck would stay in his house down among the roots of the big tree and not show himself again until he felt quite sure that his enemy had grown tired of watching and had given up the idea of catching him.

But Tommy guessed that by another day old Mr. Woodchuck would be so hungry that he would have to go out of doors again to get something to eat. And Tommy Fox could hardly wait for the night to pass. But another day came at last; and it found Tommy up and hurrying to Farmer Green's back-pasture, where Mr. Woodchuck lived. It was just growing light; and there was a heavy dew upon the grass, which Tommy didn't like at all, because he just hated to get his feet wet.

Tommy did not go near Mr. Woodchuck's hole. Although he was just a young fox, he was too wise to do that. He knew that if he went nosing around Mr. Woodchuck's dooryard the old gentleman would smell his tracks as soon as he poked his head out. So Tommy was careful to keep away from the hole where he had dug so hard the day before. He sneaked around until he had passed Mr.

Woodchuck's house; and then he crept up behind the big oak close by. And there he waited.

Tommy kept smiling. He was so pleased, because his plan was working out very well. The wind blew towards him, and Tommy saw that Mr. Woodchuck wouldn't be able to smell him when the old fellow came up into the open air.

For a long time Tommy waited there. He kept very still. And he stayed hidden behind the tree, with only one eye peeping round the tree-trunk, so that he could watch for Mr. Woodchuck. He was very patient—was Tommy. You have to be patient, you know, when you are hunting. He crouched behind the tree for at least an hour, and never once took his eye off that hole. And at last he saw Mr. Woodchuck's nose come popping out.

If Tommy hadn't been watching very closely he wouldn't have seen it at all; for Mr. Woodchuck just stuck his head up for a second, took one quick look all around, and jumped back again. He hadn't seen anything to frighten him. But he thought it best to be very careful.

Tommy waited. And pretty soon that small nose came sticking out again. This time it stayed longer. And to Tommy's great delight, in another minute he saw Mr. Woodchuck climb up and take a good look all about.

Tommy Fox hardly breathed. He didn't see how the old gentleman could help spying him. But he didn't. And then Mr. Woodchuck started off across the pasture, to find something for

breakfast. He was very hungry, for he hadn't had any supper the night before.

Tommy Fox waited until Mr. Woodchuck had gone just a few steps away from his doorway. And then Tommy stole after him. This time Tommy was between Mr. Woodchuck and his house. And Mr. Woodchuck couldn't escape.

It was all over in a second. And Tommy Fox felt very proud of himself when he reached home and showed his mother what he had brought.

"I can hunt—can't I, Mother?" he said. "Tomorrow I'm going up on the mountain and catch a bear."

"Don't be silly," Mrs. Fox said. "You know you couldn't catch a bear." But she was much pleased, in spite of what she said. For she saw that Tommy was really beginning to learn something.