

THE TALE OF TOMMY FOX

CHAPTER 13: JOHNNIE GREEN AND HIS NEW PET



BY ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY



Tommy Fox was in a terrible fix. He was caught fast by the foot in a trap; and if that isn't being in a fix, I should like to know what is.

All night long he whimpered and cried. All night long he tugged and pulled, trying to get free. But the more he tugged the more the trap hurt his foot. And the harder he cried.

Mrs. Fox couldn't help Tommy at all. She stayed with him throughout the night, and tried to comfort him. And she only left when morning came and she smelled men coming across the fields. Then, with one last sorrowful look at Tommy, she crept sadly away.

In a few minutes more Farmer Green and his boy Johnnie reached Mrs. Fox's door. And they were both greatly pleased when they saw that the trap had done its work so well.

"It's a young cub," Farmer Green said, as soon as he spied Tommy Fox.

"May I have him, Father?" Johnnie asked quickly. "I'd like him for a pet."

Tommy Fox was terribly frightened when he heard that. You see, he didn't know what a "pet" was. He thought that probably it was something like a stew, for he had been told that people ate things like that; and he could see himself, in his mind's eye, being cut up and tossed into a pot.

"A pet, eh?" said Farmer Green. "Well, I suppose so. He's hardly worth skinning. You

may have him, I guess. But look out that he doesn't bite you."

Johnnie Green was delighted. He helped his father put Tommy into an old sack, and taking the trap too, they started toward the farmhouse. When they reached Farmer Green's home Johnnie and his father fitted a stout collar about Tommy's neck. And they fastened one end of a chain to it; and the other end they tied to a long stake, which they drove into the ground in Farmer Green's door-yard. Then Johnnie Green set a big wooden box close beside the stake. He tipped the box over on its side, and threw some straw into it. And that was Tommy Fox's new home.

You might think that it was a much nicer home than he had before. But Tommy did not like it at all. All the people on the farm came and looked at him, inside the box; and Johnnie Green never left him for more than ten minutes all the rest of that day.

Tommy made up his mind that he would make a house of his own. And that very night he dug a hole in Farmer Green's dooryard, where he could crawl out of sight of everyone. Tommy liked that much better. No matter how hard Johnnie Green pulled on the chain, he couldn't drag Tommy out unless he wanted to come.

But after a few days Tommy began to get used to being a pet. He found that it was not such a terrible thing, after all. He did miss the fine runs he used to have; and the hunts; and

he missed his mother, too. He could hear her often, at night, calling to him from the fields. And then Tommy would answer, and tug at his chain. But he couldn't get away. And after a while he would go to sleep and dream pleasant dreams, about catching crickets in the long grass.