

THE TALE OF TOMMY FOX

CHAPTER 14: TOMMY FOX MAKES A STRANGE FRIEND



BY ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY



There was one thing, especially, that surprised Tommy Fox. And I think it surprised the dog Spot even more. Tommy and Spot became friends.

At first, whenever Spot came near, Tommy would run into his hole, as far as his chain would allow him. But after a time he began to peep out at his visitor. And finally he grew so bold that when Spot came to see him he stayed above ground, though to be sure he sat close to the door of his house, so that he could whisk out of sight if Spot should come too near him.

Since Spot often came to look at Johnnie Green's new pet, he began to like Tommy. And instead of growling, he would wag his tail, and try to be friendly. And the first thing they knew, they were playing together, and rolling and tumbling about, pretending to bite each other.

Now, Spot was much bigger than Tommy Fox, and stronger. And sometimes when they played together he would get so rough that Tommy would run down into his underground house and hide. But he never lost his temper, because he knew that Spot did not mean to hurt him. And Tommy was always ready to come out again and play some more.

Johnnie Green was very proud of his new pet. And one day when he was going to drive to the village he took Tommy Fox

with him. He tied Tommy's chain to the wagon and Tommy sat up on the seat beside his young master. He had a fine ride. It frightened him at first, to see so many people, for it was market-day, when the farmers for miles around came to the village to sell their butter and eggs and vegetables. There was a great number of dogs, too, running about the village streets. Tommy was glad that he was high up on the seat of the wagon, beside Johnnie Green, for he knew that he was perfectly safe there. He saw so many strange sights that after that first day whenever he saw Johnnie starting off for the village he was never satisfied unless he went too.

On the whole, Tommy Fox did not have a bad time, being Johnnie Green's pet. And although Farmer Green often complained that Johnnie would rather play with his young fox than drive the cows, or feed the chickens, or fetch water from the pump, still Farmer Green himself rather enjoyed watching Tommy Fox.

But at last something happened that made Farmer Green very angry. One morning he discovered that a fine hen had disappeared during the night. And the following night another hen vanished.

Farmer Green was puzzled. Old Spot had been loose all the time, and he had never barked once. That was what made Farmer Green suspicious.

Farmer Green went out into his door-yard, where Tommy Fox was basking in the sunshine.

Tommy looked up at Farmer Green very innocently. You would have thought he had never done anything wrong in all his life.

Farmer Green began to examine the ground about Tommy's house. He didn't find anything unusual. But when he knelt down and peered into the hole Tommy Fox had dug for himself, what should he see but several hen-feathers!

That was enough for Farmer Green. He knew then where his fat hens had gone. But he was puzzled. There was Tommy, chained fast to the stake. How could he ever have visited the hen-house?

Farmer Green picked up Tommy's chain. And to his surprise he found that the end of it wasn't fastened to the stake at all! It had worked loose, somehow. And Tommy had been free to wander about as much as he pleased.