



CHAPTER 25

WHITEFOOT FINDS OUT WHAT THE MATTER WAS



*Pity the lonely, for deep in the heart
Is an ache that no doctor can heal by his art.*

—Whitefoot.

Of all the little people of the Green Forest Whitefoot seemed to be the only one who was unhappy. And because he didn't know why he felt so he became day by day more unhappy. Perhaps I should say that night by night he became more unhappy, for during the brightness of the day he slept most of the time.

"There is something wrong, something wrong," he would say over and over to himself.

"It must be with me, because everybody else is happy, and this is the happiest time of all the year. I wish some one would tell me what ails me. I want to be happy, but somehow I just can't be."

One evening he wandered a little farther from home than usual. He wasn't going anywhere in particular. He had nothing in particular to do. He was just wandering about because somehow he couldn't remain at home. Not far away Melody the Wood Thrush was pouring out his beautiful evening song. Whitefoot stopped to listen. Somehow it made him more unhappy than ever. Melody stopped singing for a few moments. It was just then that Whitefoot heard a faint sound. It was a gentle drumming. Whitefoot pricked up his ears and listened. There it was again. He knew instantly how that sound was made. It was made by dainty little feet beating very fast

Chapter 25 -- Whitefoot Finds out What the Matter Was

on an old log. Whitefoot had drummed that way himself many times. It was soft, but clear, and it lasted only a moment.

Right then something very strange happened to Whitefoot. Yes, sir, something very strange happened to Whitefoot. All in a flash he felt better. At first he didn't know why. He just did, that was all. Without thinking what he was doing, he began to drum himself. Then he listened. At first he heard nothing. Then, soft and low, came that drumming sound again. Whitefoot replied to it. All the time he kept feeling better. He ran a little nearer to the place from which that drumming sound had come and then once more drummed. At first he got no reply.

Then in a few minutes he heard it again, only this time it came from a different place. Whitefoot became quite excited. He knew that that drumming was done by another Woodmouse, and all in a flash it came over him what had been the matter with him.

"I have been lonely!" exclaimed Whitefoot. "That is all that has been the trouble with me. I have been lonely and didn't know it. I wonder if that other Woodmouse has felt the same way."

Again he drummed and again came that soft reply. Once more Whitefoot hurried in the direction of it, and once more he was disappointed when the next reply came from a different place. By now he was getting quite excited. He was bound to find that other Woodmouse. Every time he heard that drumming, funny little thrills ran all over him. He didn't know why. They just did, that was all. He simply must find that other Woodmouse. He forgot everything else. He didn't even notice where he was going. He would drum, then wait for a reply. As soon as he heard it, he would scamper in the direction of it, and then pause to drum again. Sometimes the reply would be very

Chapter 25 -- Whitefoot Finds out What the Matter Was

near, then again it would be so far away that a great fear would fill Whitefoot's heart that the stranger was running away.