

# THE ADVENTURES OF JERRY MUSKRAT

## CHAPTER 16: THE POND IN THE GREEN FOREST



BY THORNTON W. BURGESS



Spotty the turtle was awake by the time the first rays of the rising sun began to creep through the Green Forest. He was far, far up the Laughing Brook, very much farther than he had ever been before, and as he yawned and stretched, he wondered if after all he hadn't dreamed about the wall of logs and sticks and mud across the Laughing Brook. When he had rubbed the last sleepy-wink out of his eyes, he looked again. There it was, just as he had seen it the night before! Then Spotty knew that it was real, and he began to wonder what was on the other side of it.

"I cannot climb it, for my legs were never made for climbing," said Spotty mournfully as he looked at his funny little black feet. "Oh, dear, I wish that I could climb like Happy Jack Squirrel!" Just then a thought popped into his head and chased away the little frown that had crept into Spotty's face. "Perhaps Happy Jack sometimes wishes that he could swim as I can, so I guess we are even. I can't climb, but he can't swim. How foolish it is to wish for things never meant for you!"

And with that, all the discontent left Spotty the Turtle, and he began to study how he could make the most of his short legs and his perseverance, of which, as you already know, he had a great deal. He looked this way, and he looked that way, and he saw that if he could climb to the top of the bank on one side of the Laughing Brook, he would be

able to walk right out on the strange wall of logs and sticks and mud, and then, of course, he could see just what was on the other side.

So Spotty the Turtle wasted no more time wishing that he could do something it was never meant that he should do. Instead, he picked out what looked like the easiest place to climb the bank and started up. My, my, my, it was hard work! You see, he had to carry his house along with him, for he has to carry that wherever he goes, and it would have been hard enough to have climbed that bank without carrying anything. Every time he had climbed up three steps he slipped back two steps, but he kept at it, puffing and blowing, saying over and over to himself:

"I can if I will, and will if I can!  
I'm sure to get there if I follow this plan."

Halfway up the bank Spotty lost his balance, and the house he was carrying just tipped him right over backward, and down he rolled to the place he had started from.

"I needed to cool off," said Spotty to himself and slid into a little pool of water. Then he tried the bank again, and just as before he slipped back two steps for every three he went up. But he shut his mouth tight and kept at it, and by and by he was up to the place from which he had tumbled. There he stopped to get his breath.

“I can if I will, and will if I can!

I’m sure to get there if I follow this plan,” said he and started on again. Twice more he tumbled clear down to the place he had started from, but each time he laughed at himself and tried again. And at last he reached the top of the bank.

“I said I could if I would, and I would if I could, and I have!” he cried.

Then he hurried to see what was behind the strange wall. What do you think it was? Why, a pond! Yes, Sir, there was a pond right in the middle of the Green Forest! Trees were coming up right out of the middle of it, but it was a sure enough pond. Spotty found it harder work to believe his own eyes now than when he had first seen the strange wall across the Laughing Brook.

“Why, why, why, what does it mean?” exclaimed Spotty the Turtle.

“That’s what I want to know!” cried Billy Mink, who came hurrying up just then.