

THE ADVENTURES OF JERRY MUSKRAT

CHAPTER 20: JERRY HAS A DREADFUL DISAPPOINTMENT



BY THORNTON W. BURGESS

There's nothing in this world that's sure,
No matter how we scheme and plan.
We simply have to be content
With doing just the best we can.

Jerry Muskrat had curled himself up for the night, so tired that he could hardly keep his eyes open long enough to find a comfortable place to sleep. But he was happy. Yes, indeed, Jerry was happy. He could hear the Laughing Brook beginning to laugh again. It was just a little low, gurgling laugh, but Jerry knew that in a little while it would grow into the full laugh that makes music through the Green Forest and puts happiness into the hearts of all who hear it.

So Jerry was happy, for was it not because of him that the Laughing Brook was beginning to laugh? He had worked all the long day to make a hole through the dam which some one had built across the Laughing Brook and so stopped its laughter. Now the water was running again, and soon the new, strange pond behind the dam there in the Green Forest would be gone, and the Laughing Brook and the Smiling Pool would be their own beautiful selves once more. It was because he had worked so hard all day that he was going to sleep now. Usually he would rather sleep a part of the day and be abroad at night.

Very pleasant dreams had Jerry Muskrat

that night, dreams of the dear Smiling Pool, smiling just as it had as long as Jerry could remember, before this trouble had come. He was still dreaming when Spotty the Turtle found him and waked him, for it was broad daylight. Jerry yawned and stretched, and then he lay still for a minute to listen to the pleasant murmur of the Laughing Brook. But there wasn't any pleasant murmur. There wasn't any sound at all. Jerry began to wonder if he really was awake after all. He looked at Spotty the Turtle, and he knew then that he was, for Spotty's face had such a worried look.

"Get up, Jerry Muskrat, and come look at the hole you made yesterday in the dam. You couldn't have done your work very well, for the hole has filled up so that the water does not run any more," said Spotty.

"I did do it well!" snapped Jerry crossly. "I did it just as well as I know how. You lazy folks who just sit and take sun-naps while you pretend to keep watch had better get busy and do a little work yourselves, if you don't like the way I work."

"I—I beg your pardon, Jerry Muskrat. I didn't mean to say just that," replied Spotty. "You see, we are all worried. We thought last night that by this morning the Laughing Brook would be full of water again, and we could go back to the Smiling Pool as soon as we felt like it, and here it is as bad as ever."

"Perhaps the trouble is just that some

sticks and grass drifted down in the water and filled up the hole I made; that must be the trouble," said Jerry hopefully, as he hurried towards the dam.

First he carefully examined it from the Laughing Brook side. Then he dived down under water on the other side. He was gone a long time, and Billy Mink was just getting ready to dive to see what had become of him when he came up again.

"What is the trouble?" cried Spotty the Turtle and Grandfather Frog and Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter together. "Is the hole filled up with stuff that has drifted in?"

Jerry shook his head, as he slowly climbed out of the water. "No," said he. "No, it isn't filled with drift stuff brought down by the water. It is filled with sticks and mud that somebody has put there. Somebody has filled up the hole that I worked so hard to make yesterday, and it will take me all day to open it up again."

Then Grandfather Frog and Spotty the Turtle and Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter and Jerry Muskrat stared at one another, and for a long time no one said a word.