

THE ADVENTURES OF JERRY MUSKRAT

CHAPTER 23: PADDY THE BEAVER DOES A KIND DEED



BY THORNTON W. BURGESS

Paddy the Beaver listened to all that his small cousin, Jerry Muskrat, had to tell him about the trouble which Paddy's dam had caused in the Laughing Brook and the Smiling Pool.

"You see, we who live in the Smiling Pool love it dearly, and we don't want to have to leave it, but if the water cannot run down the Laughing Brook, there can be no Smiling Pool, and so we will have to move off to the Big River," concluded Jerry Muskrat. "That is why I tried to spoil your dam."

There was a twinkle in the eyes of Paddy the Beaver as he replied: "Well, now that you have found out that you can't do that, because I am bigger than you and can stop you, what are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know," said Jerry Muskrat sadly. "I don't see what we can do about it. Of course you are big and strong and can do just as you please, but it doesn't seem right that we who have lived here so long should have to move and go away from all that we love so just because you, a stranger, happen to want to live here. I tell you what!" Jerry's eyes sparkled as a brand new thought came to him. "Couldn't you come down and live in the Smiling Pool with us? I'm sure there is room enough!"

Paddy the Beaver shook his head. "No," said he, and Jerry's heart sank. "No, I can't do that because down there there isn't any of

the kind of food I eat. Besides, I wouldn't feel at all safe in the Smiling Pool. You see, I always live in the woods. No, I couldn't possibly come down to live in the Smiling Pool. But I'm truly sorry that I have made you so much worry, Cousin Jerry, and I'm going to prove it to you. Now you sit right here until I come back."

Before Jerry realized what he was going to do, Paddy the Beaver dived into the pond, and as he disappeared, his broad tail hit the water such a slap that it made Jerry jump. Then there began a great disturbance down under water. In a few minutes up bobbed a stick, and then another and another, and the water grew so muddy that Jerry couldn't see what was going on. Paddy was gone a long time. Jerry wondered how he could stay under water so long without air. All the time Paddy was just fooling him. He would come up to the surface, stick his nose out, nothing more, fill his lungs with fresh air, and go down again.

Suddenly Jerry Muskrat heard a sound that made him prick up his funny little short ears and whirl about so that he could look over the other side of the dam into the Laughing Brook. What do you think that sound was? Why, it was the sound of rushing water, the sweetest sound Jerry had listened to for a long time. There was a great hole in the dam, and already the brook was beginning to laugh as the water rushed down it.

“How do you like that, Cousin Jerry?” said a voice right in his ear. Paddy the Beaver had climbed up beside him, and his eyes were twinkling.

“It—it’s splendid!” cried Jerry. “But—but you’ve spoiled your dam!”

“Oh, that’s all right,” replied Paddy. “I didn’t really want it now, anyway. I don’t usually build dams at this time of year, and I built this one just for fun because it seemed such a nice place to build one. You see, I was traveling through here, and it seemed such a nice place, that I thought I would stay a while. I didn’t know anything about the Smiling Pool, you know. Now, I guess I’ll have to move on and find a place where I can make a pond in the fall that will not trouble other people. You see, I don’t like to be troubled myself, and so I don’t want to trouble other people. This Green Forest is a very nice place.”

“The very nicest place in all the world excepting the Green Meadows and the Smiling Pool!” replied Jerry promptly. “Won’t you stay, Cousin Paddy? I’m sure we would all like to have you.”

“Of course we would,” said a gruff voice right beside them. It was Grandfather Frog.

Paddy the Beaver looked thoughtful. “Perhaps I will,” said he, “if I can find some good hiding-places in the Laughing Brook.”