

CHAPTER II

Danny Meadow Mouse and His Short Tail

ALL Danny Meadow Mouse could think about was his short tail. He was so ashamed of it that whenever anyone passed, he crawled out of sight so that they should not see how short his tail was. Instead of playing in the sunshine as he used to do, he sat and sulked. Pretty soon his friends began to pass without stopping. Finally one day old Mr. Toad sat down in front of Danny and began to ask questions.

“What’s the matter?” asked old Mr. Toad.

“Nothing,” replied Danny Meadow Mouse.

“I don’t suppose there really is anything the matter, but what do you think is the matter?” said old Mr. Toad.

Danny fidgeted, and old Mr. Toad looked up at jolly, round, red Mr. Sun and winked. “Sun is just as bright as ever, isn’t it?” he inquired.

“Yes,” said Danny.

“Got plenty to eat and drink, haven’t you?”

continued Mr. Toad.

“Yes,” said Danny.

“Seems to me that that is a pretty good-looking suit of clothes you’re wearing,” said Mr. Toad, eyeing Danny critically. “Sunny weather, plenty to eat and drink, and good clothes--must be you don’t know when you’re well off, Danny Meadow Mouse.”

Danny hung his head. Finally he looked up and caught a kindly twinkle in old Mr. Toad’s eyes. “Mr. Toad, how can I get a long tail like my cousin Whitefoot of the Green Forest?” he asked.

“So that’s what’s the matter! Ha! ha! ha! Danny Meadow Mouse, I’m ashamed of you! I certainly am ashamed of you!” said Mr. Toad. “What good would a long tail do you? Tell me that.”

For a minute Danny didn’t know just what to say. “I--I--I’d look so much better if I had a long tail,” he ventured.

Old Mr. Toad just laughed. “You never saw a Meadow Mouse with a long tail, did you? Of course not. What a sight it would be! Why, everybody on the Green Meadows would laugh themselves sick at the sight! You see you need to be slim and trim and handsome to carry a long tail well. And then what a nuisance it would be! You would always have to be thinking of your tail and taking care to keep it out of harm’s way. Look at me. I’m homely. Some folks

call me ugly to look at. But no one tries to catch me as Farmer Brown's boy does Billy Mink because of his fine coat; and no one wants to put me in a cage because of a fine voice. I am satisfied to be just as I am, and if you'll take my advice, Danny Meadow Mouse, you'll be satisfied to be just as you are."

"Perhaps you are right," said Danny Meadow Mouse after a little. "I'll try."