

CHAPTER XIV  
*Farmer Brown Sets a Trap*

PETER Rabbit was in trouble. He had got into mischief and now, like everyone who gets into mischief, he wished that he hadn't. The worst of it was that he was a long way from his home in the dear Old Briar-patch, and he didn't know how he ever could get back there again. Where was he? Why, in the stone wall on one side of Farmer Brown's young peach orchard. How Peter blessed the old stone wall in which he had found a safe hiding-place! Bowser had hung around nearly all night, so that Peter had not dared to try to go home. Now it was daylight, and Peter knew it would not be safe to put his nose outside.

Peter was worried, so worried that he couldn't go to sleep as he usually does in the daytime. So he sat hidden in the old wall and waited and watched. By and by he saw Farmer Brown and Farmer Brown's boy come out into the orchard. Right away they saw the mischief which Peter had done, and he could tell

by the sound of their voices that they were very, very angry. They went away, but before long they were back again, and all day long Peter watched them work putting something around each of the young peach-trees. Peter grew so curious that he forgot all about his troubles and how far away from home he was. He could hardly wait for night to come so that he might see what they had been doing.

Just as jolly, round, red Mr. Sun started to go to bed behind the Purple Hills, Farmer Brown and his boy started back to the house. Farmer Brown was smiling now.

"I guess that will fix him!" he said.

"Now what does he mean by that?" thought Peter. "Whom will it fix? Can it be me? I don't need any fixing."

He waited just as long as he could. When all was still, and the moonlight had begun to make shadows of the trees on the snow, Peter very cautiously crept out of his hiding-place. Bowser the Hound was nowhere in sight, and everything was as quiet and peaceful as it had been when he first came into the orchard the night before. Peter had fully made up his mind to go straight home as fast as his long legs would take him, but his dreadful curiosity insisted that first he must find out what Farmer Brown and his boy had been doing to the young peach trees.

So Peter hurried over to the nearest tree. All around the trunk of the tree, from the ground clear up higher than Peter could reach, was wrapped wire netting. Peter couldn't get so much as a nibble of the delicious bark. He hadn't intended to take any, for he had meant to go right straight home, but now that he couldn't get any, he wanted some more than ever,--just a bite. Peter looked around. Everything was quiet. He would try the next tree, and then he would go home.

But the next tree was wrapped with wire. Peter hesitated, looked around, turned to go home, thought of how good that bark had tasted the night before, hesitated again, and then hurried over to the third tree. It was protected just like the others. Then Peter forgot all about going home. He wanted some of that delicious bark, and he ran from one tree to another as fast as he could go.

At last, way down at the end of the orchard, Peter found a tree that had no wire around it. "They must have forgotten this one!" he thought, and his eyes sparkled. All around on the snow were a lot of little, shiny wires, but Peter didn't notice them. All he saw was that delicious bark on the young peach tree. He hopped right into the middle of the wires, and then, just as he reached up to take the first bite of bark, he felt something tugging at one of his hind legs.