

CHAPTER XVII

Danny Meadow Mouse Becomes Worried

DANNY Meadow Mouse limped around through the dear Old Briar-patch, where he had lived with Peter Rabbit ever since he had squirmed out of the claws of Hooty the Owl and dropped there, right at the feet of Peter Rabbit. Danny limped because he was still lame and sore from Hooty's terrible claws, but he didn't let himself think much about that, because he was so thankful to be alive at all. So he limped around in the Old Briar-patch, picking up seed which had fallen on the snow, and sometimes pulling down a few of the red berries which cling all winter to the wild rose bushes. The seeds in these were very nice indeed, and Danny always felt especially good after a meal of them.

Danny Meadow Mouse had grown very fond of Peter Rabbit, for Peter had been very, very good to him. Danny felt that he never, never could repay all of Peter's kindness. It had been very good of Peter

to offer to share the Old Briar-patch with Danny, because Danny was so far from his own home that it would not be safe for him to try to get back there. But Peter had done more than that. He had taken care of Danny, such good care, during the first few days after Danny's escape from Hooty the Owl. He had brought good things to eat while Danny was too weak and sore to get things for himself. Oh, Peter had been very good indeed to him!

But now, as Danny limped around, he was not happy. No, sir, he was not happy. The truth is, Danny Meadow Mouse was worried. It was a different kind of worry from any he had known before. You see, for the first time in his life, Danny was worrying about someone else. He was worrying about Peter Rabbit. Peter had been gone from the Old Briar-patch a whole night and a whole day. He often was gone all night, but never all day too. Danny was sure that something had happened to Peter. He thought of how he had begged Peter not to go up to Farmer Brown's young peach orchard. He had felt in his bones that it was not safe, that something dreadful would happen to Peter. How Peter had laughed at him and bravely started off! Why hadn't he come home?

As he limped around, Danny talked to himself:

“Why cannot people be content
With all the good things that are sent,
And mind their own affairs at home
Instead of going forth to roam?”

It was now the second night since Peter Rabbit had gone away. Danny Meadow Mouse couldn't sleep at all. Round and round through the Old Briar-patch he limped, and finally sat down at the edge of it to wait and watch. At last, just as jolly, round, red Mr. Sun sent his first long rays of light across the Green Meadows, Danny saw something crawling towards the Old Briar-patch. He rubbed his eyes and looked again. It was--no, it couldn't be--yes, it *was* Peter Rabbit! But what was the matter with him? Always before Peter had come home lipperty-lipperty-lipperty-lip, but now he was crawling, actually *crawling*! Danny Meadow Mouse didn't know what to make of it.

Nearer and nearer came Peter. Something was following him. No, Peter was dragging something after him. At last Peter started to crawl along one of his little private paths into the Old Briar-patch. The thing dragging behind caught in the brambles, and Peter fell headlong in the snow, too tired and worn out to move. Then Danny saw what the trouble was. A wire was fast to one of Peter's long hind legs,

and to the other end of the wire was fastened part of a stake. Peter had been caught in a snare! Danny hurried over to Peter and tears stood in his eyes.

“Poor Peter Rabbit! Oh, I'm so sorry, Peter!” he whispered.