

CHAPTER XXIII
Reddy Fox Grows Curious

DANNY Meadow Mouse had sat perfectly still for a long time inside the old tomato can in which he had found a refuge from Redtail the Hawk. He didn't dare so much as put his head out for a look around, lest Redtail should be circling overhead ready to pounce on him.

"If I stay here long enough, he'll get tired and go away, if he hasn't already," thought Danny. "This has been a pretty exciting morning so far, and I find that I am a little tired. I may as well take a nap while I am waiting to make sure that the way is clear."

With that Danny curled up in the old tomato can. But it wasn't meant that Danny should have that nap. He had closed his eyes, but his ears were still open, and presently he heard soft footsteps drawing near. His eyes flew open, and he forgot all about sleep, you may be sure, for those footsteps sounded familiar. They sounded to Danny very, very much like the footsteps of--whom do you think? Why,

Reddy Fox! Danny's heart began to beat faster as he listened. Could it be? He didn't dare peep out. Presently a little whiff of scent blew into the old tomato can. Then Danny knew--it *was* Reddy Fox.

"Oh, dear! I hope he doesn't find that I am in here!" thought Danny. "I wonder what under the sun has brought him up here just now."

If the truth were to be known, it was curiosity that had brought Reddy up there. Reddy had been hunting for his breakfast some distance away on the Green Meadows when Redtail the Hawk had tried so hard to catch Danny Meadow Mouse. Reddy's sharp eyes had seen Redtail the minute he left the tree in pursuit of Danny, and he had known by the way Redtail flew that he saw something he wanted to catch. He had watched Redtail swoop down and had heard his scream of rage when he missed Danny because Danny had dodged into the old tomato can. He had seen Redtail strike and strike again at something on the ground, and finally fly off in disgust with empty claws.

"Now, I wonder what it was Redtail was after and why he didn't get it," thought Reddy. "He acts terribly put out and disappointed. I believe I'll go over there and find out."

Off he started at a smart trot towards the patch of short grass where he had seen Redtail the Hawk

striking at something on the ground. As he drew near, he crept very softly until he reached the very edge of the open patch. There he stopped and looked sharply all over it. There was nothing to be seen but an old tomato can. Reddy had seen it many times before.

“Now what under the sun could Redtail have been after here?” thought Reddy. “The grass isn’t long enough for a grasshopper to hide in, and yet Redtail didn’t get what he was after. It’s very queer. It certainly is very queer.”

He trotted out and began to run back and forth with his nose to the ground, hoping that his nose would tell him what his eyes couldn’t. Back and forth, back and forth he ran, and then suddenly he stopped.

“Ha!” exclaimed Reddy. He had found the scent left by Danny Meadow Mouse when he ran across towards the old tomato can. Right up to the old can Reddy’s nose led him. He hopped over the old can, but on the other side he could find no scent of Danny Meadow Mouse. In a flash he understood, and a gleam of satisfaction shone in his yellow eyes as he turned back to the old can. He knew that Danny must be hiding in there.

“I’ve got you this time!” he snarled, as he sniffed at the opening in the end of the can.