

CHAPTER XXIV
Reddy Fox Loses His Temper

REDDY Fox had caught Danny Meadow Mouse, and yet he hadn't caught him. He had found Danny hiding in the old tomato can, and it didn't enter Reddy's head that he couldn't get Danny out when he wanted to. He was in no hurry. He had had a pretty good breakfast of grasshoppers, and so he thought he would torment Danny a while before gobbling him up. He lay down so that he could peep in at the open end of the old can and see Danny trying to make himself as small as possible at the other end. Reddy grinned until he showed all his long teeth. Reddy always is a bully, especially when his victim is a great deal smaller and weaker than himself.

"I've got you this time, Mr. Smarty, haven't I?" taunted Reddy.

Danny didn't say anything.

"You think you've been very clever because you have fooled me two or three times, don't you?"

Well, this time I've got you where your tricks won't work," continued Reddy, "so what are you going to do about it?"

Danny didn't answer. The fact is, he was too frightened to answer. Besides, he didn't know what he could do. So he just kept still, but his bright eyes never once left Reddy's cruel face. For all his fright, Danny was doing some hard thinking. He had been in tight places before and had learned never to give up hope. Something might happen to frighten Reddy away. Anyway, Reddy had to get him out of that old can before he would admit that he was really caught.

For a long time Reddy lay there licking his chops and saying all the things he could think of to frighten poor Danny Meadow Mouse. At last he grew tired of this and made up his mind that it was time to end it and Danny Meadow Mouse at the same time. He thrust his sharp nose in at the opening in the end of the old can, but the opening was too small for him to get more than his nose in, and he only scratched it on the sharp edges without so much as touching Danny.

"I'll pull you out," said Reddy and thrust in one black paw.

Danny promptly bit it so hard that Reddy yelped with pain and pulled it out in a hurry. Presently he

tried again with the other paw. Danny bit this one harder still, and Reddy danced with pain and anger. Then he lost his temper completely, a very foolish thing to do, as it always is. He hit the old can, and away it rolled with Danny Meadow Mouse inside. This seemed to make Reddy angrier than ever. He sprang after it and hit it again. Then he batted it first this way and then that way, growing angrier and angrier. And all the time Danny Meadow Mouse managed to keep inside, although he got a terrible shaking up.

Back and forth across the patch of short grass Reddy knocked the old can, and he was in such a rage that he didn't notice where he was knocking it to. Finally he sent it spinning into the long grass on the far side of the open patch, close to one of Danny's private little paths. Like a flash Danny was out and scurrying along the little path. He dodged into another and presently into a third, which brought him to a tangle of barbed wire left there by Farmer Brown when he had built a new fence. Under this he was safe.

"Phew!" exclaimed Danny, breathing very hard. "That was the narrowest escape yet! But I guess I'll get that special grass seed I started out for, after all."

And he did, while to this day Reddy Fox wonders

how Danny got out of the old tomato can without his knowing it.

And so you see what temper does
For those who give it rein;
It cheats them of the very thing
They seek so hard to gain.

Danny has had many more adventures, but there isn't room to tell about them here. Besides, Grandfather Frog is anxious that you should hear about the queer things that have happened to him. They are told in the next book.