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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Old Granny Fox: Farmer Brown's Boy Forgets To Close The Gate (23/29)

How easy 'tis to just forget
Until, alas, it is too late.
The most methodical of folks
Sometimes forget to shut the gate.
—Old Granny Fox.

Farmer Brown's Boy is not usually the forgetful kind. He is pretty good about not forgetting. But Farmer Brown's boy isn't perfect by any means. He does forget sometimes, and he is careless sometimes. He would be a funny kind of boy otherwise. But take it day in and day out, he is pretty thoughtful and careful.

The care of the hens is one of Farmer Brown's boy's duties. It is one of those duties which most of the time is a pleasure. He likes the biddies, and he likes to take care of them. Every morning one of the first things he does is to feed them and open the henhouse so that they can run in the henyard if they want to. Every night he goes out just before dark, collects the eggs and locks the henhouse so that no harm can come to the biddies while they are asleep on their roosts. After the big snowstorm he had shovelled a place in the henyard where the hens could come out and exercise

and get a sun-bath when they wanted to, and in the very warmest part of the day they would do this. Always in the daytime he took the greatest care to see that the henyard gate was fastened, for no one knew better than he how bold Granny and Reddy Fox can be when they are very hungry, and in winter they are very apt to be very hungry most of the time. So he didn't intend to give them a chance to slip into that henyard while the biddies were out, or to give the biddies a chance to stray outside where they might be still more easily caught.

But at night he sometimes left that gate open, as Granny Fox had found out. You see, he thought it didn't matter because the hens were locked in their warm house and so were safe, anyway.

It was just at dusk of the afternoon of the day when Granny and Reddy Fox had talked over a plan to get one of those fat hens that Farmer Brown's boy collected the eggs and saw to it that the biddies had gone to roost for the night. He had just started to close the little sliding door across the hole through which the hens went in and out in the daytime when Bowser the Hound began to make a great racket, as if terribly excited about something.

Farmer Brown's boy gave the little sliding door a hasty push, picked up his basket of eggs, locked the henhouse door and hurried out through the gate without stopping to close it. You see, he was in a hurry to find out what Bowser was making such a fuss about. Bowser was

yelping and whining and tugging at his chain, and it was plain to see that he was terribly eager to be set free.



"What is it, Bowser, old boy? Did you see something?" asked Farmer Brown's boy as he patted Bowser on the head. "I can't let you go, you know, because you probably would go off hunting all night and come home in the

morning all tired out and with sore feet. Whatever it was, I guess you've scared it out of a year's growth, old fellow, so we'll let it go at that."

Bowser still tugged at his chain and whined, but after a little he quieted down. His master looked around behind the barn to see if he could see what had so stirred up Bowser, but nothing was to be seen, and he returned, patted Bowser once more, and went into the house, never once giving that open henyard gate another thought.

Half an hour later old Granny Fox joined Reddy Fox, who was waiting on the doorstep of their home. "It is all right, Reddy; that gate is open," said she.

"How did you do it, Granny?" asked Reddy eagerly.

"Easily enough," replied Granny. "I let Bowser get a glimpse of me just as his master was locking up the henhouse. Bowser made a great fuss, and of course, Farmer Brown's boy hurried out to see what it was all about. He was in too much of a hurry to close that

gate, and afterwards he forgot all about it or else he thought it didn't matter. Of course, I didn't let him get so much as a glimpse of me."

"Of course," said Reddy.