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How Mr. Fox was saved by his Friends

Abbie Phillips Walker

It had been a very long, cold winter, and many of the animals in the woods had found it hard to get enough to eat.

Mr. Fox, however, had not been one of those who were unfortunate, for this had been a very prosperous winter for him.

The farmers had found it impossible to keep Mr. Fox out of their poultry yards and houses, and Mr. Fox grew fat while many of his friends in the woods grew thin.

His friends had called many times at his house, knowing he had a well-filled pantry, and as they had many times had Mr. Fox at their home for supper and dinner, they had expected now, when he had so much and they had so little to eat, that he would ask them to eat at his table.

But Mr. Fox didn't do anything of the sort. He would eat a very big breakfast, and then if anyone called he would let them stay and stay until they felt quite sure Mr. Fox did not intend to bring on any food for them, and they would go away hungry.

"They needn't think I am going to hunt and run my legs off bringing home chickens and geese for them," he would say after he had closed the door on one or two of his neighbors.



"Times are hard for all of us, and just because I happen to be able to find something to eat, I do not see why I should have to divide with all my neighbors. Friends are a nuisance, anyway. If I did not have any friends at all, I should be far happier and could eat in peace."

One night when the wind was blowing and the snow falling fast, Mr. Fox looked into his pantry and found he had plenty of food for several days. "I will not go over the hill tonight," he said; "it is far too cold, and besides, I feel like having a feast tonight. It is storming so that all the neighbors will have to stay in instead of prowling around my house bothering me. I'll just build up a big fire and bring out a nice fat duck and a chicken, too, and I will brew a big pot of tea and eat

that big plum cake I brought from the house over the hill."

So Mr. Fox fastened his door and his windows, too, and drew the shades, so it was dark from the outside as if no one was at home. Then he put a lot of wood into the stove, and when the water boiled he poured it over the tea in a big tin pot and set it on the back of the stove. Then he pulled the table up close to the stove and put the big lamp on it, and from the pantry he brought the duck and chicken and a big loaf of bread and a pot of butter, and last of all he brought out the big plum cake.

Mr. Fox then drew up his chair in front of the stove and began to eat. He ate and ate until the table looked bare, and then from eating so much and drinking the hot tea, Mr. Fox began to nod.

Nod, nod went his head, and he was sound asleep. But what Mr. Fox did not know was that he was too near the stove and that the wood had made a very hot fire and that his coat was beginning to smoke.

Up curled the smoke, and by and by a tiny spark showed on his coat tail, and Mr. Fox began to cough from the smoke.

He coughed so hard that he awoke. The spark had become a tiny flame and came right up in Mr. Fox's face when he awoke.

My, but he was frightened; he jumped up and ran for the door, upsetting the lamp as he went.

Outdoors he ran, screaming "Fire, fire! Save me, save me! I am burning up." Out of their homes ran all his neighbors. Jack Rabbit was the first to reach him. "Roll over in the snow," he said to Mr. Fox.

Then Peter Rabbit and Mr. Bear and Old Reddy Fox came along, and they threw snow on Mr. Fox, and soon they had Mr. Fox out of danger, although his coat was not worth calling a coat.

"Oh! look at your house," said Peter Rabbit, pointing to the smoke coming out of the open door, and sure enough, Mr. Fox's house was on fire from the overturned lamp.

Mr. Fox ran for home, all his neighbors following. Peter Rabbit got a pail and drew some water from the well, and Jack Rabbit took it to the door of the house,



and Mr. Bear threw the water on the fire.

Mr. Fox was so badly frightened he could not do a thing but stare with wide-open mouth, but his friends and neighbors worked hard, and soon they had put out the fire, but the house was so full of smoke that Mr. Fox could not stay there, so Mr. Bear asked him to come over to his house and stay that night.

But before he went, Mr. Fox told his friends that he was sure that the pantry was not burned, and that if they cared to get in the pantry window, they might eat all they found.

It did not take Mr. Bear long to open the window, and Jack and Peter Rabbit jumped in.

They found a basket, and into it they put ducks and chickens, bread and everything else they could find.

They all went over to Mr. Bear's house for the feast, and a feast they all had; that is, all but Mr. Fox. He laid down on Mr. Bear's couch and thought about the narrow escape he had, and that if it had not been for his friends and neighbors, he might have been badly burned and lost his home, too.

"I guess friends are pretty nice to have after all," he thought. "I'll never again treat mine as I have this winter. The next time food is scarce, I will share mine, if I have any, with my friends who are less fortunate."



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