

## Danny Meadow Mouse Learns to Laugh

by Thornton W. Burgess

Danny Meadow Mouse sat on his doorstep and sulked. The Merry Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind ran past, one after another, and pointing their fingers at him cried:

"Fie, Danny Meadow Mouse!  
Better go inside the house!  
Babies cry—oh my! oh my!  
You're a baby—go and cry!"

Pretty soon along the Lone Little Path came Peter Rabbit. Peter Rabbit looked at Danny Meadow Mouse. Then he pointed a finger at him and said:

"Cry, Danny, cry!  
Mammy'll whip you by and by!  
Then we'll all come 'round to see  
How big a baby you can be.  
Cry, Danny, cry!"

Danny Meadow Mouse began to snivel. He cried softly to himself as Peter Rabbit hopped off down the Lone Little Path. Soon along came Reddy Fox. He saw Danny Meadow Mouse sitting on his doorstep crying all by himself. Reddy Fox crept up behind a tall bunch of grass. Then suddenly he jumped out right in front of Danny Meadow Mouse.

"Boo!" cried Reddy Fox.

It frightened Danny Meadow Mouse. He jumped almost out of his skin, and ran into the house crying at the top of his voice.

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Reddy Fox

"Danny, Danny, crying Dan  
Boo-hoo-hooed and off he ran!"

Then Reddy Fox chased his tail all the way down the Lone Little Path onto the Green Meadows.

By and by Danny Meadow Mouse came out again and sat on his doorstep. He had stopped crying, but he looked very unhappy and cross and sulky. Hopping and skipping down the Lone Little Path came Striped Chipmunk.

"Come play with me," called Danny Meadow Mouse.

Striped Chipmunk kept right on hopping and skipping down the Lone Little Path.

"Don't want to," said Striped Chipmunk, sticking his tongue in his cheek.

"Cry-baby Danny  
Never'll be a manny!  
Run to mamma, Danny, dear,  
And she will wipe away your tear!"

Striped Chipmunk hopped and skipped out of sight, and Danny Meadow Mouse began to cry again because Striped Chipmunk would not play with him.

It was true, dreadfully true! Danny Meadow Mouse *was* a cry-baby and no one wanted to play with him. If he stubbed his toe he cried. If Striped Chipmunk beat him in a race he cried. If the Merry Little Breezes pulled his whiskers just in fun he cried. It had come to such a pass that all the little meadow people delighted to tease him just to make him cry. Nowhere on all the Green Meadows was there such a cry-baby as Danny Meadow Mouse.

So Danny sat on his doorstep and cried because no one would play with him and he was lonely. The more he thought how lonely he was, the more he cried.

Presently along came old Mr. Toad. Now Mr. Toad looks very grumpy and out of sorts, but that is because you do not know old Mr. Toad. When he reached the house of Danny Meadow Mouse he stopped right in front of Danny. He put his right hand behind his right ear and listened. Then he put his left hand behind his left ear and listened some more. Finally he put both hands on his hips and began to laugh.

Now Mr. Toad's mouth is very big indeed, and when he opens it to laugh he opens it very wide indeed.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Toad.

Danny Meadow Mouse cried harder than ever, and the harder he cried the harder old Mr. Toad laughed. By and by Danny Meadow Mouse stopped crying long enough to say to Mr. Toad:

"What are you laughing for, Mr. Toad?"

Mr. Toad stopped laughing long enough to reply:

"I'm laughing, Danny Meadow Mouse, because you are crying at me. What are you crying for?"

"I'm crying," said Danny Meadow Mouse, "because you are laughing at me." Then Danny began to cry again, and Mr. Toad began to laugh again.

"What's all this about?" demanded some one right behind them.

It was Jimmy Skunk.

"It's a new kind of game," said old Mr. Toad. "Danny Meadow Mouse is trying to see if he can cry longer than I can laugh."

Then old Mr. Toad once more opened his big mouth and began to laugh harder than ever. Jimmy Skunk looked at him for just a minute and he looked so funny that Jimmy Skunk began to laugh too.

Now a good honest laugh is like whooping cough—it is catching. The first thing Danny Meadow Mouse knew his tears would not come. It's a fact, Danny Meadow Mouse had run short of tears. The next thing he knew he wasn't crying at all—he was laughing. Yes, Sir, he actually was laughing. He tried to cry, but it was of no use at all; he just *had* to laugh.

The more he laughed the harder old Mr. Toad laughed. And the harder Mr. Toad laughed the funnier he looked. Pretty soon all three of them, Danny Meadow Mouse, old Mr. Toad and Jimmy Skunk, were holding their sides and rolling over and over in the grass, they were laughing so hard.

By and by Mr. Toad stopped laughing.

"Dear me, dear me, this will never do!" said Mr. Toad. "I must get busy in my garden.

"The little slugs, they creep and crawl  
And eat and eat from spring to fall  
They never stop to laugh nor cry,  
And really couldn't if they'd try.

So if you'll excuse me I'll hurry along to get them out of my garden."

Mr. Toad started down the Lone Little Path. After a few hops he paused and turned around.

"Danny Meadow Mouse," said old Mr. Toad, "an honest laugh is like sunshine; it brightens the whole world. Don't forget it."

Jimmy Skunk remembered that he had started out to find some beetles, so still chuckling he started for the Crooked Little Path up the hill. Danny Meadow Mouse, once more alone, sat down on his doorstep. His sides were sore, he had laughed so hard, and somehow the whole world had changed. The grass seemed greener than he had ever seen it before. The sunshine was brighter and the songs of the birds were sweeter. Altogether it was a very nice world, a very nice world indeed to live in. Somehow he felt as if he never wanted to cry again.

Pretty soon along came the Merry Little Breezes again, chasing butterflies. When they saw Danny Meadow Mouse sitting on his doorstep they pointed their fingers at him, just as before, and shouted:

"Fie, Danny Meadow Mouse!  
Better go inside the house!  
Babies cry—oh my! oh my!  
You're a baby—go and cry!"

For just a little minute Danny Meadow Mouse wanted to cry. Then he remembered old Mr. Toad and instead began to laugh.

The Merry Little Breezes didn't know just what to make of it. They stopped chasing butterflies and crowded around Danny Meadow Mouse. They began to tease him. They pulled his whiskers and rumbled his hair. The more they teased the more Danny Meadow Mouse laughed.

When they found that Danny Meadow Mouse really wasn't going to cry, they stopped teasing and

invited him to come play with them in the long meadow grass. Such a good frolic as they did have! When it was over Danny Meadow Mouse once more sat down on his doorstep to rest.

Hopping and skipping back up the Lone Little Path came Striped Chipmunk. When he saw Danny Meadow Mouse he stuck his tongue in his cheek and cried:

"Cry-baby Danny  
Never'll be a manny!  
Run to mamma, Danny dear,  
And she will wipe away your tear!"

Instead of crying Danny Meadow Mouse began to laugh. Striped Chipmunk stopped and took his tongue out of his cheek. Then he began to laugh too.

"Do you want me to play with you?" asked Striped Chipmunk, suddenly.

Of course Danny did, and soon they were having the merriest kind of a game of hide and seek. Right in the midst of it Danny Meadow Mouse caught his left foot in a root and twisted his ankle. My, how it did hurt! In spite of himself tears did come into his eyes. But he winked them back and bravely began to laugh.

Striped Chipmunk helped him back to his doorstep and cut funny capers while Mother Meadow Mouse bound up the hurt foot, and all the time Danny Meadow Mouse laughed until pretty soon he forgot that his foot ached at all.

When Peter Rabbit came jumping along up the Lone Little Path he began to shout as soon as he saw Danny Meadow Mouse:

"Cry, Danny, cry!  
Mammy'll whip you by and by!  
Then we'll all come 'round to see  
How big a baby you can be.  
Cry, Danny, cry!"

But Danny didn't cry. My, no! He laughed instead. Peter Rabbit was so surprised that he stopped to see what had come over Danny Meadow Mouse. When he saw the bandaged foot and heard how Danny had twisted his ankle Peter Rabbit sat right down on the doorstep beside Danny Meadow Mouse and told him how sorry he was, for happy-go-lucky Peter Rabbit is very tender-hearted. Then he told Danny all about the wonderful things he had seen in his travels, and of all the scrapes he had gotten into. When Peter Rabbit finally started off home Danny Meadow Mouse still sat on his doorstep. But no longer was he lonely. He watched Old Mother West Wind trying to gather her Merry Little Breezes into her big bag to take to their home behind the Purple Hills, and he laughed right out when he saw her catch the last mischievous Little Breeze and tumble him, heels over head, in with the others.

"Old Mr. Toad was right, just exactly right," thought Danny Meadow Mouse, as he rocked to and fro on his doorstep. "It *is* much better, oh very much better, to laugh than to cry."

And since that day when Danny Meadow Mouse learned to laugh, no one has had a chance to point a finger at him and call him a cry-baby. Instead every one has learned to love merry little Danny Meadow Mouse, and now they call him "Laughing Dan."

Source:

Burgess, Thornton. "Danny Meadow Mouse Learns to Laugh." *Mother West Wind's Children*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers. 1911. Electronic.