

The Tale of Tommy Trout Who Didn't Mind

by Thornton W. Burgess

In the Laughing Brook, which rippled and sings all day long, lived Mr. Trout and Mrs. Trout, and a whole lot of little Trouts. There were so many little Trouts that Mr. Trout and Mrs. Trout were kept very busy indeed getting breakfast and dinner and supper for them, and watching out for them and teaching them how to swim and how to catch foolish little flies that sometimes fell on the water and how to keep out of the way of big hungry fish and sharp eyed Mr. Kingfisher and big men and little boys who came fishing with hooks and lines.

Now all the little Trouts were very, very good and minded just what Mrs. Trout told them—all but Tommy Trout, for Tommy Trout—oh, dear, dear! Tommy Trout never could mind right away. He always had to wait a little instead of minding when he was spoken to.

Tommy Trout didn't mean to be bad. Oh dear, no! He just wanted to have his own way, and because Tommy Trout had his own way and didn't mind Mrs. Trout there isn't any Tommy Trout now. No sir, there isn't as much as one little blue spot of his beautiful little coat left because—why, just because Tommy Trout didn't mind.

One day when round, red Mr. Sun was shining and the Laughing Brook was singing on its way to join the Big River, Mrs. Trout started to get some nice plump flies for dinner. All the little Trouts were playing in their dear little pool, safe behind the Big Rock. Before she started Mrs. Trout called all the little Trouts around her and told them not to leave their little pool while she was gone, “For,” said she, “something dreadful might happen to you.”

All the little Trouts, except Tommy Trout, promised that they would surely, surely stay inside their dear little pool. Then they all began to jump and chase each other and play as happy as could be, all but Tommy Trout.

As soon as Mrs. Trout had started, Tommy Trout swam off by himself to the edge of the pool. “I wonder what is on the other side of the Big Rock,” said Tommy Trout. “The sun is shining and the brook is laughing and nothing could happen if I go just a little speck of a ways.”

So, when no one was looking, Tommy Trout slipped out of the safe little pool where all the other little Trouts were playing. He swam just a little speck of a ways farther still. Now he could see almost around the Big Rock. Then he swam just a little speck of a ways farther and—oh dear, dear! he looked right into the mouth of a great big, big fish called Mr. Pickerel, who is very fond of little Trouts and would like to eat one for breakfast every day.

“Ah ha!” said Mr. Pickerel, opening his big, big mouth very, very wide.

Tommy Trout turned to run back to the dear, dear safe little pool where all the other little Trouts were playing so happily, but he was too late. Into that great big, big mouth he went instead, and Mr. Pickerel swallowed him whole.

“Ah ha,” said Mr. Pickerel, “I like little Trouts.”

And nothing more was ever heard of Tommy Trout, who didn't mind.

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