

## Farewells and Welcomes

by Thornton W. Burgess

All through the long summer Peter Rabbit watched his feathered friends and learned things in regard to their ways he never had suspected. As he saw them keeping the trees of the Old Orchard free of insect pests working in Farmer Brown's garden, and picking up the countless seeds of weeds everywhere, he began to understand something of the wonderful part these feathered folks have in keeping the Great World beautiful and worth while living in.

He had many a hearty laugh as he watched the bird babies learn to fly and to find their own food. All summer long they were going to school all about him, learning how to watch out for danger, to use their eyes and ears, and all the things a bird must know who would live to grow up.

As autumn drew near Peter discovered that his friends were gathering in flocks, roaming here and there. It was one of the first signs that summer was nearly over, and it gave him just a little feeling of sadness. He heard few songs now, for the singing season was over. Also he discovered that many of the most beautifully dressed of his feathered friends had changed their finery for sober traveling suits in preparation for the long journey to the far South where they would spend the winter. In fact he actually failed to recognize some of them at first.

September came, and as the days grew shorter, some of Peter's friends bade him good-by. They were starting on the long journey, planning to take it in easy stages for the most part. Each day saw some slip away. As Peter thought of the dangers of the long trip before them he wondered if he would ever see them again. But some there were who lingered even after Jack Frost's first visit. Welcome and Mrs. Robin, Winsome and Mrs. Bluebird. Little Friend the Song Sparrow and his wife were among these. By and by even they were forced to leave.

Sad indeed and lonely would these days have been for Peter had it not been that with the departure of the friends he had spent so many happy hours with came the arrival of certain other friends from the Far North where they had made their summer homes. Some of these stopped for a few days in passing. Others came to stay, and Peter was kept busy looking for and welcoming them.

A few old friends there were who would stay the year through. Sammy Jay was one. Downy and Hairy the Woodpeckers were others. And one there was whom Peter loves dearly. It was Tommy Tit the Chickadee.

Now Tommy Tit had not gone north in the spring. In fact, he had made his home not very far from the Old Orchard. It just happened that Peter hadn't found that home, and had caught only one or two glimpses of Tommy Tit. Now, with household cares ended and his good-sized family properly started in life, Tommy Tit was no longer interested in the snug little home he had built in a hollow birch-stub, and he and Mrs. Chickadee spent their time flitting about hither, thither, and yon, spreading good cheer. Every time Peter visited the Old Orchard he found him there, and as Tommy was always ready for a bit of merry gossip, Peter soon ceased to miss Jenny Wren.

"Don't you dread the winter, Tommy Tit?" asked Peter one day, as he watched Tommy clinging head down to a twig as he picked some tiny insect eggs from the under side.

“Not a bit,” replied Tommy. “I like winter. I like cold weather. It makes a fellow feel good from the tips of his claws to the tip of his bill. I’m thankful I don’t have to take that long journey most of the birds have to. I discovered a secret a long time ago, Peter; shall I tell it to you?”

“Please, Tommy,” cried Peter. “You know how I love secrets.”

“Well,” replied Tommy Tit, “this is it: If a fellow keeps his stomach filled he will keep his toes warm.”

Peter looked a little puzzled. “I—I—don’t just see what your stomach has to do with your toes,” said he.

Tommy Tit chuckled. It was a lovely throaty little chuckle. “Dee, dee, dee!” said he. “What I mean is, if a fellow has plenty to eat he will keep the cold out, and I’ve found that if a fellow uses his eyes and isn’t afraid of a little work, he can find plenty to eat. At least I can. The only time I ever get really worried is when the trees are covered with ice. If it were not that Farmer Brown’s boy is thoughtful enough to hang a piece of suet in a tree for me, I should dread those ice storms more than I do. As I said before, plenty of food keeps a fellow warm.”

“I thought it was your coat of feathers that kept you warm,” said Peter.

“Oh, the feathers help,” replied Tommy Tit. “Food makes heat and a warm coat keeps the heat in the body. But the heat has got to be there first, or the feathers will do no good. It’s just the same way with your own self, Peter. You know you are never really warm in winter unless you have plenty to eat...”

“That’s so,” replied Peter thoughtfully. “I never happened to think of it before. Just the same, I don’t see how you find food enough on the trees when they are all bare in winter.”

*“Dee, Dee, Chickadee!  
Leave that matter just to me,”*

Chuckled Tommy Tit. “You ought to know by this time Peter Rabbit, that a lot of different kinds of bugs lay eggs on the twigs and trunks of trees. Those eggs would stay there all winter and in the spring hatch out into lice and worms if it were not for me. Why, sometimes in a single day I find and eat almost five hundred eggs of those little green plant lice that do so much damage in the spring and summer. Then there are little worms that bore in just under the bark, and there are other creatures who sleep the winter away in little cracks in the bark. Oh, there is plenty for me to do in the winter. I am one of the policemen of the trees. Downy and Hairy the Woodpeckers, Seep-Seep the Brown Creeper and Yank-Yank the Nuthatch are others. If we didn’t stay right here on the job all winter, I don’t know what would become of the Old Orchard.”

Tommy Tit hung head downward from a twig while he picked some tiny insect eggs from the under side of it. It didn’t seem to make the least difference to Tommy whether he was right side up or upside down. He was a little animated bunch of black and white feathers, not much bigger than Jenny Wren. The top of his head, back of his neck and coat were shining black. The sides of his head and neck were white. His back was ashy. His sides were a soft cream-buff, and his wing and tail feathers were edged with white. His tiny bill was black, and his little black eyes snapped and twinkled in a way good to see. Not one among all Peter’s friends is such a merry-hearted little fellow as Tommy Tit the

Chickadee. Merriment and happiness bubble out of him all the time, no matter what the weather is. He is the friend of everyone and seems to feel that everyone is his friend.

“I’ve noticed,” said Peter, “that birds who do not sing at any other time of year sing in the spring. Do you have a spring song, Tommy Tit?”

“Well, I don’t know as you would call it a song, Peter,” chuckled Tommy. “No, I hardly think you would call it a song. But I have a little love call then which goes like this: Phoe-be! Phoe-be!”

It was the softest, sweetest little whistle, and Tommy had rightly called it a love call. “Why, I’ve often heard that in the spring and didn’t know it was your voice at all,” cried Peter. “You say Phoebe plainer than does the bird who is named Phoebe, and it is ever so much softer and sweeter. I guess that is because you whistle it.”

“I guess you guess right,” replied Tommy Tit. “Now I can’t stop to talk any longer. These trees need my attention. I want Farmer Brown’s boy to feel that I have earned that suet I am sure he will put out for me as soon as the snow and ice come. I’m not the least bit afraid of Farmer Brown’s boy. I had just as soon take food from his hand as from anywhere else. He knows I like chopped-up nut-meats, and last winter I used to feed from his hand every day.” Peter’s eyes opened very wide with surprise. “Do you mean to say,” said he, “that you and Farmer Brown’s boy are such friends that you dare sit on his hand?”

Tommy Tit nodded his little black-capped head vigorously. “Certainly,” said he. “Why not? What’s the good of having friends if you can’t trust them? The more you trust them the better friends they’ll be.”

“Just the same, I don’t see how you dare to do it,” Peter replied. “I know Farmer Brown’s boy is the friend of all the little people, and I’m not much afraid of him myself, but just the same I wouldn’t dare go near enough for him to touch me.”

“Pooh!” retorted Tommy Tit. “That’s no way of showing true friendship. You’ve no idea, Peter, what a comfortable feeling it is to know that you can trust a friend, and I feel that Farmer Brown’s boy is one of the best friends I’ve got. I wish more boys and girls were like him.”

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