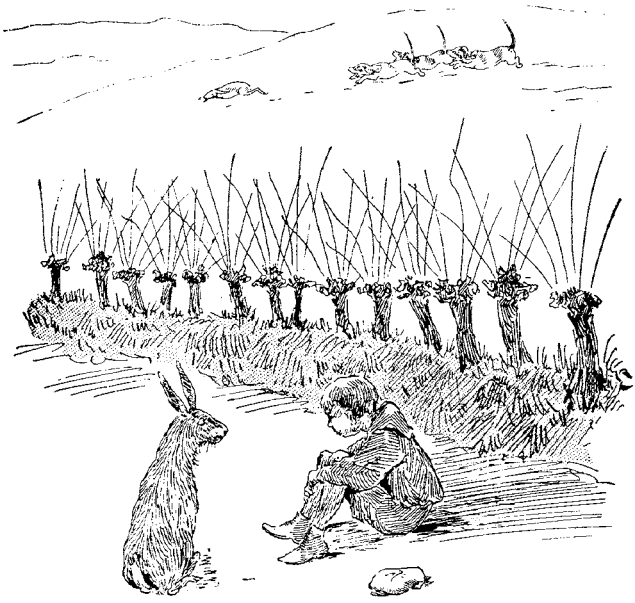
# TOMMY SMITH'S ANIMALS



**“HE MAY HAVE FOUND ANOTHER HARE”**

# TOMMY SMITH'S ANIMALS

BY

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## CHAPTER I

# THE MEETING

*"The owl calls a meeting, and has an idea:*
*They all think it good, though it SOUNDS rather queer."*

THERE was once a little boy, named Tommy Smith, who was very cruel to animals, because nobody had taught him that it was wrong to be so. He would throw stones at the birds as they sat in the trees or hedges; and if he did not hit them, that was only because they were too quick for him, and flew away as soon as they saw the stone coming. But he always *meant* to hit them—yes, and to kill them too,—which made it every bit as bad as if he really had killed them. Then, if he saw a rat, he would make his dog run after it, and if the poor thing tried to escape by running down a hole, he and the dog together would dig it out, and then the dog would bite it with his sharp teeth until it was quite dead. It never seemed to occur to this boy that the poor rat had done *him* no harm, and that it might be the father or mother of some little baby rats, who would now die of hunger. Even if the rat got away, he would whip the dog for not catching it, yet the dog had done his best; for, of course, dogs must do what their masters tell them, and cannot know any better. It was just the same with hares or

rabbits, squirrels, rooks, or partridges. Indeed, this boy could not see any animal playing about, and doing no harm, without trying to frighten it or to hurt it.

When the spring came, and the birds began to build their nests, and to lay their pretty eggs in them, then it is dreadful to think how cruel this Tommy Smith was. He would look about amongst the trees and bushes, and when he had found a nest, he would take all the eggs that were in it, and not leave even one for the poor mother bird to sit on when she came back. Indeed, he would often tear down the nest too, after he had taken the eggs. Perhaps you will wonder what he did with these eggs. Well, when he had brought them home and shown them to his father and mother, who never thought of scolding him, or to his little brothers and sisters (for he was the eldest of the family), he would throw them away, and think no more about them. If he had left them in the nest, then out of each pretty little egg would have come a pretty little bird. But now, for every egg he had taken away, there was one bird less to sing in the woods in the spring and summer.

At last this boy became such a nuisance to all the animals round about, that they determined to punish him in some way or other. They thought the first thing to do was for all of them to meet together and have a good talk about it. In a wood, not far off, there was a nice open space where the ground was smooth and covered with moss. Here they all agreed to come one fine night, for they thought it would be nice and quiet then, and that nobody would disturb them, as, perhaps, they might do in the daytime.

So, as soon as the moon rose, they began to assemble, and I wish you could have been there too, to see them all come, sometimes one at a time, and sometimes two or three together.

The rat was one of the first to arrive, and then came the hare and the rabbit arm in arm, for they knew each other well, and were very good friends. The frog was late, for he had had a good way to hop from the nearest pond, where he lived, so that his cousin, the toad, who was slower, but lived nearer, got there before him. The snake had no need to make a journey at all, for he lived under a bush just on the edge of the open space. All the little birds, too, had gone to roost in the trees and bushes close by, so as to be ready in good time; and, when the moon rose, they drew out their heads from under their wings, and were wide awake in a moment. The rook and the partridge, and other large birds, were there as well, and the squirrel sat with his tail over his head, on the branch of a small fir tree. Then there were weasels, and lizards, and hedgehogs, and slow-worms, and many other animals besides.

In fact, if you had seen them all together, you would have wondered how one little boy could have found time to plague and worry so many different creatures. But you must remember that even a very *little* boy can do a *great* deal of mischief. Perhaps there were some animals there that little Tommy Smith had not hurt, because he had not yet seen them, but these came because they knew he *would* hurt them as soon as he could; and, besides, they were angry because their friends and companions had been ill-treated by him.

At last it seemed as if there was nobody else to come, and that everything was ready. Still, they seemed waiting for something, and all at once a great owl came swooping down, and settled on a large mole-hill which was just in the middle of the open space. Now, the owl, as perhaps you know, is a very wise bird, and, for this reason, all the other animals had chosen him to be the chief at their meeting, and to decide what was best to be done, in case they should not agree amongst themselves. He at once showed *how* wise he was, by saying that before he gave his own opinion he would hear what everybody else had to say. Then everybody began to talk at once, and there was a great hubbub, until the owl said that only one should speak at a time, and that the hare had better begin, because he was the largest of all the animals there.

So the hare stood up, and said he thought the best way to punish Tommy Smith was for every one of them to do him what harm he could. For his part, he was only a timid animal, and not at all accustomed to hurt people. Still, he had very sharp teeth, and he thought he might be able to jump as high as Tommy Smith's face and give him a good bite on the cheek or ear, and then run off so quickly that nobody could catch him. The rabbit spoke next, and said that he was just as timid as the hare, and not so strong or so swift. All *he* could do was to go on digging holes, and he hoped that some day Tommy Smith would fall into one of them. The hedgehog then got up, and said he would hide himself in one of these holes and put up his prickles for Tommy Smith to fall on. This would be sure to hurt him, and perhaps it

might even put one of his eyes out. The rat thought it would be better if the hedgehog were to get into Tommy Smith's bed, so as to prick him all over when he was undressed; but the hedgehog would not agree to this, as he did not understand houses, and thought he would be sure to be caught if he went into one.

"Well, then," said the rat, "if you are afraid I will go myself, for I know the way about, and am not at all frightened. In the middle of the night, when it is quite dark, and when Tommy Smith is fast asleep, I will creep up the stairs and into his room, and then I can run up the counterpane to the foot of his bed and bite his toes."

"Why his toes?" said the weasel. "*I* can do much better than that, and if you will only show me the way into his room, I will bite the veins of his throat, and then he will soon bleed to death."

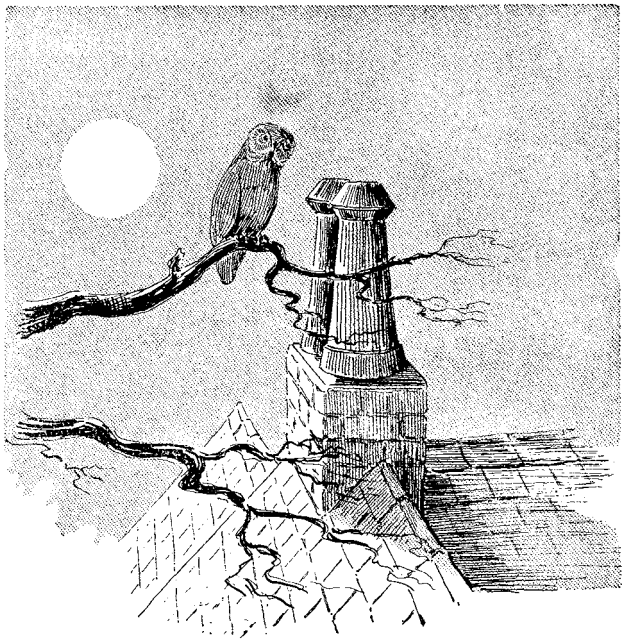
"That would be taking too much trouble," said the adder, coming from under his bush. "You all know that *my* bite is poisonous. Well, I know where this bad boy goes out walking, so I will just hide myself somewhere near, and when he comes by I will spring out and bite his ankle. Then he will soon die."

The birds, too, had different things to suggest. Some said they would scratch Tommy Smith's face with their claws, and others that they would peck his eyes out. The frog wanted to hop down his throat and choke him, and the lizard was ready to crawl up his back and tickle him, if they thought *that* would do any good.

At length, when everyone else had spoken, the owl

called for silence, and then he gave his own opinion in these words:—"I have now heard what every animal has had to say, and I have no doubt that we could easily hurt this boy very much, or perhaps even kill him, if we really tried to. But would it not be a better plan, first to see if we cannot make little Tommy Smith a better boy? Many little boys are unkind to animals because they know nothing about them, and think that they are stupid and useless. If they knew how clever we all of us really are, and what a lot of good we do, I do not think they would be unkind to us any more. I am sure that they would then have quite a friendly feeling towards us. But they cannot know this without being taught. Tommy Smith's father and mother *ought*, of course, to teach him, but as they will not do so, why should not we teach him ourselves? To do this, we shall have to speak to him in his own language, as he does not understand ours; but that is not such a difficult matter to us animals. I myself can speak it quite well when I want to, for I often sit on the trees near old houses at night, or even on the houses themselves, and I can hear the conversations coming up through the chimneys. That is why I am so wise. So I can easily teach all of you enough of it to make *you* able to talk to a little boy. My idea, then, is to *teach* little Tommy Smith before we begin to *punish* him, and it will be quite as easy to do the one as the other. Only let the next animal that he is going to kill or throw stones at, call out to him, and tell him not to do so. This will surprise him so much that he will be sure to leave off, and then each of us can tell him something about ourselves in turn. In this way he will get such a

high idea of all of us, that he will never annoy us any more, but treat us with great respect for the future."



"THAT IS WHY I AM SO WISE."

All the other animals thought this was a very clever idea of the owl's, and they agreed to do what he said, before trying anything else. So they begged him to begin teaching them the little-boy language at once (all except the rat, for he knew it too), so that they should lose no time. This the owl was quite ready to do, and he taught them so well, and they all learnt so quickly, that when little Tommy Smith got up next morning to have his breakfast, there was hardly an animal in the whole country that was not able to talk to him.

## CHAPTER II

# THE FROG AND THE TOAD

*"Tommy Smith takes a turn in the garden next day,*
*And he finds the frog ready with something to say."*

AS soon as he had had his breakfast, Tommy Smith went out into the garden. It had been raining a little, and the first thing he saw was a large yellow frog sitting on the wet grass. Tommy Smith had a stick in his hand, and he at once lifted it up over his shoulder.

"Don't hit me," said the frog. "That would be a *very* wicked thing to do."

Tommy Smith was so surprised to hear a frog speak that he dropped his stick and stood with both his eyes wide open for several seconds.

"Why do you want to kill me?" said the frog.

Tommy Smith thought he must say something, so he answered, "Because you are a nasty, stupid frog."

"I don't know what you mean by calling me nasty," said the frog. "Look at my bright smooth skin, how nice and clean it is—cleaner than your own face, I daresay, although it is not long since you have washed it. As for my being stupid, you see that I can speak your language,

although you cannot speak mine; and there are lots of other things which I am able to do, but you are not. I think I can catch a fly better than you can."

By this time it seemed to Tommy Smith as if it was quite natural to be talking to an animal, so he said, "I never thought that a frog could catch a fly."

"You shall see," said the frog. And as he spoke a fly settled on a blade of grass just in front of him. Then all at once a pink streak seemed to shoot out of the frog's mouth; back it came again—snap! His mouth, which had been wide open, was shut once more, and the fly was nowhere to be seen.

"Have you caught it?" said Tommy Smith.

"Yes," said the frog, "and swallowed it too."

"But how did you do it?" said Tommy Smith; "and what was that funny pink thing that came out of your mouth?"

"That was my tongue," the frog answered.

"Your tongue!" cried Tommy Smith. "But it looked so funny—not at all like my own tongue."

"No," said the frog. "My tongue is quite different from yours, and I do not use it in the same way. Hold out your hand so that I can hop into it, and then I will show you all about it."

Tommy Smith did as he was told, and—plop! there was the frog sitting in his hand. He at once opened his mouth, which was a very wide one, and allowed Tommy Smith to look at his tongue. What a funny tongue it was!

It seemed to be turned backwards, for the tip, which was forked, instead of being just inside the lips as it is with us, was right down the throat, whilst the root of it was where the tip of our tongue is.

"But how do you use a tongue like that?" said Tommy Smith.

"Put the tip of your forefinger against your thumb," said the frog; "only, first, you must turn your hand so that the back of it is towards the ground, and the palm upwards." Tommy Smith did so. "Now shoot your finger back as hard as you can." Tommy Smith did this too. "That," said the frog, "is the way I shoot my tongue out of my mouth when I want to catch a fly. Like this"—and he shot it out again. "You see it flies out like the lash of a whip, and my aim is so good that it always hits what I want it to, whether it is a fly or any other insect. Then I bring it back, just as you would bring your finger back to your thumb again, or as the lash of a whip flies back when you jerk the handle. The tip of it goes right down my throat where it was before, and the fly goes down with it."

"But why does the fly stay on your tongue?" said Tommy Smith. "Why doesn't it fly away?"

"It would if it could, of course," said the frog; "but it can't. My tongue, you see, is sticky—just feel it,—and so whatever it touches sticks to it, and comes back with it, if it isn't too large."

"Well, it is very curious," said Tommy Smith. "But when you said you could catch a fly, I did not know that

you were going to eat it too. Then, do you like flies? and do you eat them every day?"

"I eat them when I can get them," said the frog; "but I like them better at night than in the daytime, if only I can catch them asleep. *You* eat during the day, and go to sleep at night. *I* am a frog, and we frogs like to be quiet in the daytime, and come out to feed when it is dark. We eat all sorts of insects—beetles, and flies, and moths, and caterpillars, and we eat slugs as well, and that is why we are so useful."

"Useful?" cried Tommy Smith. "Oh, I don't believe that! I am sure that a frog can be of no use to anybody."

"If you were a gardener you would think differently," said the frog; "at least, if you were not a very ignorant one. Have I not told you that I eat slugs and insects, and do you not know that slugs and insects eat the leaves of the flowers and vegetables in your garden? Have you never seen your father or his gardener pouring something over his rose-trees to kill the insects upon them? Now, I eat a great many insects in a single night, and I am only *one* of the frogs in your garden. There are others there besides me. If we were all to be killed, your father would find it much more difficult to have nice roses, and he would lose other flowers too, for there are insects which do harm to all of them. As for the slugs, if you will go out some night with a lantern, you may see them feeding on some of the handsomest plants, with your own eyes. That is to say, unless one of us frogs has been there; for if we have, you will not

see any. Then you have seen caterpillars feeding on the cabbages. Well, *I* feed on those caterpillars. So always remember that the boy who kills a frog, does harm to his father's garden."

"I don't want to do that," said Tommy Smith; "so, if what you say is true"—

"You can find it in a natural history book, if you look," said the frog; "but I ought to know best myself. And I can tell you this, that when a frog speaks to a little boy, he always speaks the truth."

"Well, then," said Tommy Smith, "I will never hurt a frog again."

How pleased the poor frog was when he heard that. He gave a great hop out of Tommy Smith's hand, and came down upon the grass again, and then he hopped about for a little while, jumping higher each time than the time before. "Frogs always speak the truth," he said,—"when they speak to little boys. And now, perhaps, you would like to learn something more about me. Ask me any question you like, and I will answer it, because of what you have just promised."

This puzzled Tommy Smith a little, because he did not know where to begin, but at last he said, "You seem to me a very big frog. Were you always as big as you are now?"

"Why, of course not," said the frog, "a frog grows up just as much as a little boy does. I was once so small that you would hardly have been able to see me. But, besides being smaller, I was quite a different shape to what I am

now. I had no legs at all, but instead of them I had a long tail, with which I used to swim about in the water, so that I was much more like a fish than a frog, and many people would have thought that I was a fish."

"That sounds very funny," said Tommy Smith.

"But were not you once much smaller than you are now?" said the frog.

"Oh yes!" Tommy Smith answered, "but however small I was, I was always a little boy, and had hands and feet, just as I have now."

"With you it is different," said the frog; "but there are some animals who are one thing when they are born, but change into another as they grow older. It is so with us frogs, and, if you listen, I will tell you all about it."

"Go on," said Tommy Smith, "I should like to hear very much."

"In the nice warm weather," the frog continued, "we hop about the country, and then we like to come into gardens. But in the winter we go to ponds and ditches and bury ourselves in the mud at the bottom, and go to sleep there. In the early spring, when the weather begins to get a little warmer, we come up again, and then the mother frog lays a lot of eggs, which float about in the water, and look like a great ball of jelly. After a time, out of each egg there comes a tiny little brown thing, and directly it comes out, it begins to swim about in the water, as well as if it had had swimming lessons, although, of course, it has never had any. It soon grows bigger, and then you can see that it has a large round

head and a long tail, but you cannot see any legs. But, as it goes on growing, a small pair of hind legs come out, one on each side of the tail, and then every day the tail gets smaller and the hind legs larger. Still there are no front legs yet, but at last these come too. The tail is now quite short, and the head and body begin to look like a frog's head and body, which they did not do before, and they go on looking more and more like one, until, at last, the little brown thing with a tail, that swam about like a fish in the water, has changed into a little baby frog, that hops about on the land. Then this little baby frog grows larger and larger, until, at last, he becomes a fine fat frog, as big and as handsome as I am."

"It all seems very curious," said little Tommy Smith; "and I never knew anything about it before."

"That is because nobody ever told you," said the frog, "and you have never thought of finding out for yourself. But have you not passed by ponds in the spring time and seen those little brown things with tails that I have been telling you about, swimming about in them?"

"Oh yes, I have!" said Tommy Smith; "but I always thought that those were tadpoles."

"They are tadpoles," said the frog, "but they are young frogs for all that. A little tadpole grows into a big frog, just as a little boy grows into a big man. So you see, what a funny life mine has been, and what a lot of curious things have happened to me."

"Yes, you have had a funny life, Mr. Frog," said Tommy Smith, "and I think it is very interesting. But is there any other clever thing you can do besides catching

flies? I can catch flies myself, but I do it with my hand instead of with my tongue."

"I can change my skin," said the frog, "and *that* is something which *you* cannot do."

"No," said Tommy Smith; "and I do not believe you can do it either. I think you are only laughing at me."

"Well," said the frog, "as it happens, my skin fits me quite comfortably now, and is not at all too tight, so I do not want to change it yet. But I have a cousin—a toad—who is quite ready to have a new one. He lives a little way off, in the shrubbery; so if you would like to see how he does it, I can bring you to him. He is very good natured, like myself, and if you will only promise to leave off hurting him, as well as me, he will be very pleased to show you, I am sure. I must tell you, too, that he is almost as useful in a garden as I am, for he lives on the same things, and catches flies and slugs just as I do."

"Then isn't he *quite* as useful?" said Tommy Smith; but as the frog didn't seem to hear, he went on with—"Then I will not hurt him any more than I will you."

"Come along, then," said the frog; and he began to hop in front of the little boy until they came to the shrubbery, where, in the mould beside a laurel bush, there sat a great, solemn-looking toad.

"I have brought someone to see you," said the frog. "This is little Tommy Smith, who used to be such a bad boy, and kill every animal he saw; but now he has promised not to hurt either of us."

"I am glad to hear it," answered the toad, "and I hope he will soon learn to leave other creatures alone too. Well, what is it he wants?"

"He wants to see you change your skin," said the frog.

"He had better look at me, then," said the toad, "for that is just what I am doing."

Tommy Smith bent down to look, and then he saw that the toad was wriggling about in rather a funny way, as if he was a little uncomfortable. He noticed, too, that his skin had split along the back, and it seemed to be wrinkling up and getting loose all over him, although it had been too tight before. This loose skin was dirty and old-looking, but underneath it, where it was split, Tommy Smith could see a nice new one that looked ever so much better. The more the toad wriggled, the looser the old skin got, and it was soon plain that he was wriggling himself out of it, just as you might wriggle your hand out of an old glove. At last he had got right out of it, and there lay the old skin on the ground.

"You see," said the frog, "that is how we change our skin, just as you would change a suit of clothes. Does he not look handsome in his new one?"

"Very handsome—for a toad," said Tommy Smith. (The toad only heard the first two words of this, so he was *very* pleased.) "But what is he doing with his old skin, now that he has got it off?"

"If you wait a little, you will see," said the frog.

All this time the toad was pushing his old skin

backwards and forwards with his two front feet, and he kept on doing this until, at last, he had rolled it up into a sort of ball. Then all at once he opened his great wide mouth and swallowed the ball, just as if it had been a large pill.

Tommy Smith was so surprised that he could hardly believe his eyes. "He has swallowed his own skin!" he cried.

"Of course I have," said the toad; "and the best thing to do with it, *I* think. I always like to be tidy, and not to leave things lying about. Now, good-morning," and he began to crawl away, for he was not an *idle* toad, but had business to attend to.

"And I have something to see about," said the frog, "so I will say good-bye, too, for the present. But remember what you have promised—never to hurt a frog or a toad;" and, with two or three great hops, he was out of sight.

Tommy Smith stood thinking about it all for some time, and then he ran into the house to tell everybody all the wonderful things he had learnt about frogs and toads, and to beg them never to kill any, because they do good in the garden.