



CLASSICS TO GO

**THE ADVENTURES OF
CHATTERER THE
RED SQUIRREL**

THORNTON W. BURGESS

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Chatterer the Red Squirrel
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It seemed as if that little voice inside had fairly shouted in his ears: "I am afraid." Frontispiece.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

IT SEEMED AS IF THAT LITTLE VOICE INSIDE HAD FAIRLY SHOUTED IN HIS EARS, "I AM AFRAID"	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"WHAT'S THAT?" SAMMY JAY ASKED SHARPLY	12
"HAVE YOU FOUND A NEW HOME YET?" ASKED PETER	26
VERY CAUTIOUSLY CHATTERER PEEPED INSIDE THE HOLE	67
"YOU TELL CHATTERER THAT I'LL GET HIM YET!" SNARLED SHADOW	84
"I'D BE WILLING TO TRY IT IF IT WAS OF ANY USE. BUT IT ISN'T," SAID PRICKLY PORKY	97

I

CHATTERER THE RED SQUIRREL RUNS FOR HIS LIFE

Chatterer the Red Squirrel had been scolding because there was no excitement. He had even tried to make some excitement by waking Bobby Coon and making him so angry that Bobby had threatened to eat him alive. It had been great fun to dance around and call Bobby names and make fun of him. Oh, yes, it had been great fun. You see, he knew all the time that Bobby couldn't catch him if he should try. But now things were different. Chatterer had all the excitement that he wanted. Indeed, he had more than he wanted. The truth is, Chatterer was running for his life, and he knew it.

It is a terrible thing, a very terrible thing to have to run for one's life. Peter Rabbit knows all about it. He has run for his life often. Sometimes it has been Reddy Fox behind him, sometimes Bowser the Hound, and once or twice Old Man Coyote. Peter has known that on his long legs his life has depended, and more than once a terrible fear has filled his heart. But Peter has also known that if he could reach the old stone wall or the dear Old Briar-patch first, he would be safe, and he always has reached it. So when he has been running with that terrible fear in his heart, there has always been hope there, too.

But Chatterer the Red Squirrel was running without hope. Yes, Sir, there was nothing but fear, terrible fear, in his heart, for he knew not where to go. The hollow tree or the holes in the old stone wall where he would be safe from any one else, even Farmer Brown's boy, offered him no safety now, for the one who was following him with hunger in his

anger-red eyes could go anywhere that he could go—could go into any hole big enough for him to squeeze into. You see, it was Shadow the Weasel from whom Chatterer was running, and Shadow is so slim that he can slip in and out of places that even Chatterer cannot get through.

Chatterer knew all this, and so, because it was of no use to run to his usual safe hiding places, he ran in just the other direction. He didn't know where he was going. He had just one thought: to run and run as long as he could and then, well, he would try to fight, though he knew it would be of no use.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" he sobbed, as he ran out on the branch of a tree and leaped across to the next tree, "I wish I had minded my own business! I wish I had kept my tongue still. Shadow the Weasel wouldn't have known where I was if he hadn't heard my voice. Oh, dear! oh, dear me! What can I do? What can I do?"

Now in his great fright Chatterer had run and jumped so hard that he was beginning to grow very tired. Presently he found that he must make a very long jump to reach the next tree. He had often made as long a jump as this and thought nothing of it, but now he was so tired that the distance looked twice as great as it really was. He didn't dare stop to run down the tree and scamper across. So he took a long breath, ran swiftly along the branch, and leaped. His hands just touched the tip of the nearest branch of the other tree. He tried his very best to hold on, but he couldn't. Then down, down, down he fell. He spread himself out as flat as he could, and that saved him a little, but still it was a dreadful fall, and when he landed, it seemed for just a minute as if all the breath was gone from his body. But it wasn't quite, and in another minute he was scrambling up the tree.

II

CHATTERER'S LAST CHANCE

Chatterer, still running for his life and without the least hope, suddenly saw a last chance to escape from Shadow the Weasel. That is, he saw something that might offer him a chance. He couldn't be sure until he had tried, and even then he might escape from one danger only to run right into another equally great. What Chatterer saw was a big brown bunch near the top of a tall chestnut-tree, and he headed for that tree as fast as ever he could go. What was that big brown bunch? Why it was Redtail the Hawk, who was dozing there with his head drawn down between his shoulders dreaming.

Now old Redtail is one of Chatterer's deadliest enemies. He is quite as fond of Red Squirrel as is Shadow the Weasel, though he doesn't often try to catch one, because there are other things to eat much easier to get. Chatterer had had more than one narrow escape from old Redtail and was very much afraid of him, yet here he was running up the very tree in which Redtail was sitting. You see, a very daring idea had come into his head. He had seen at once that Redtail was dozing and hadn't seen him at all. He knew that Redtail would just as soon have Shadow the Weasel for dinner as himself, and a very daring plan had popped into his head.

"I may as well be caught by Redtail as Shadow," he thought, as he ran up the tree, "but if my plan works out right, I won't be caught by either. Anyway, it is my very last chance."

Up the tree he scrambled, and after him went Shadow the Weasel. Shadow had been so intent on catching Chatterer that he had not noticed old Redtail, which was just as Chatterer had hoped. Up, up he scrambled, straight past old