

THE TALE OF BENNY BADGER BY ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY

CHAPTER XII. The Prairie Chicken.

After he left Mr. Fox, Benny Badger hurried here and there and everywhere in search of a prairie chicken.



"Yes, indeed," she answered.

dame, who was so busy catching grasshoppers for her breakfast that she hadn't noticed him.

"He did not dare to go too near her, for fear of scaring her. So he called to her in as gentle a tone as he could, saying, 'Don't be alarmed, madam! I only want to ask you a question.'"

The prairie chicken stretched her neck as high as she was able, and looked all around.

"Here I am!" Benny sang out from a grassy hummock.

The startled lady saw that he was not near enough to be dangerous. So she asked him, with a proud air, what the question might be.

"I'm interested in birds' eggs," Benny explained. "Have you any, madam?"

The prairie chicken took a few steps towards him, in a very grand manner.

"Yes, indeed," she answered. "I have a baker's dozen! They are the most beautiful eggs I've ever seen—though perhaps I shouldn't say so... They're speckled with brownish specks," she continued.

"How interesting!" Benny Badger exclaimed. "I must have a look at those eggs. Where is your nest, madam?"

And just then the prairie chicken did a strange thing. Without a word of warning she sprang into the air and sailed away, leaving Benny Badger to gaze after her, and wonder why she hadn't answered his question.

He soon made up his mind that he would find her nest, anyhow. Now, since there wasn't a tree anywhere in the neighborhood, Benny felt quite sure that the lady's nest must be on the ground.

And since he knew that all prairie chickens slept at night, he waited until dark before he began his search, for he wanted to find Mrs. Prairie Chicken at home when he called on her.

So when night came once more, Benny Badger left his den and went forth on his errand.

He had gone only a short distance when he met his old friend, Mr. Fox, who had told him a little—and very little, too—about eggs. "Are you having any luck tonight?" Benny Badger inquired.

was. But since Mr. Fox shook his head, he decided that it must be "no."

"I think we're too late," Mr. Fox remarked. "The eggs must have all hatched by this time."

Benny Badger hastened to set Mr. Fox right.

"That can't be possible," he replied. "I met Mrs. Prairie Chicken this morning and she told me she had a baker's dozen in her nest."

"You must be mistaken about that," Mr. Fox assured him. "Where did you say her nest is?"

"I didn't say," replied Benny. "No, of course not!" Mr. Fox corrected himself. "What I meant was, where did Mrs. Prairie Chicken say it is?"

"She didn't say," replied Benny Badger.

"That's unfortunate," Mr. Fox told him. "It would have saved us a good deal of trouble if she had explained where she lives."

Then he told Benny Badger to go home, and not to trouble himself any more. "I will hunt for the old lady's nest," Mr. Fox declared.

Benny Badger couldn't help thinking that Mr. Fox was a very kind person. And he went away feeling that it was very time to have a friend like him.

But after a while he began to wonder if he wasn't mistaken; for he happened to remember that Mr. Fox hadn't said a single word about letting him know when he had found the nest with the 13 eggs in it.

"Yes, indeed," she answered.

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