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THE BURGESS
SEASHORE BOOK

Thornton Burgess

ill. Southwick and Sutton

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The Burgess Seashore Book for Children

THORNTON BURGESS

ILLUSTRATED BY
W. H. SOUTHWICK AND GEORGE SUTTON



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PREFACE

The seashore has a natural history all its own. It has been my experience that few of the host who seek the seashore every summer have the slightest acquaintance with the life of the beach, the rocks and the salt marshes. I recall how, as a boy, I was forever picking up things on the shore and asking "What is this?" and "What is that?" and never finding out. The Sand Dollar I knew as such. No one ever told me that it was an Urchin. I suspect that it is much the same way with the children of to-day.

It is to meet what seems to me a real need that this volume has been prepared. It makes no pretense of being more than it really is,—an introduction to the life of the seashore. Like its predecessors in this series—the Burgess Bird Book for Children, the Burgess Animal Book for Children and the Burgess Flower Book for Children—it is intended to be at once a storybook and a handbook within its limitations.

In its preparation those things most frequently seen along the Atlantic coast have been selected. A few of the rarer species have been added. The book does not pretend to cover in any degree of fullness the life of the seashore. It covers those things most likely to catch the eye and the interest of a child and does this in a way to make identification easily possible. It is hoped that it will arouse sufficient interest to lead the reader to desire to know more and to seek that knowledge in more scientific and complete works.

To Mr. W. H. Southwick I am indebted for the photographs used in the illustrations. These photographs were made by him especially for this book. Also, I am his debtor for his painstaking care to make his drawings accurate as well as beautiful. His work and the drawings of the seashore birds by Mr. George M.

Sutton do much to give the book such value as it may possess. Especially am I indebted to Mr. S. N. F. Sanford of the Boston Society of Natural History for his verification of scientific names and other helpful assistance.

As in previous volumes, the use of scientific names has been avoided in the text, where they have no place for children. These scientific names and scientific descriptions of the various subjects treated in the book will be found in the Appendix. It is offered with the hope that between its covers many little folk and some older ones may find pleasure and the answers to many perplexing questions.

THORNTON W. BURGESS

I. DANNY MEADOW MOUSE GOES TO THE SEASHORE

Travel will, I think you'll find,
Greatly broaden out the mind.

Danny Meadow Mouse

DANNY MEADOW Mouse has his share of curiosity. In fact, I doubt if there is one among all the little people of the Green Meadows and the Green Forest who is without curiosity. Just now the thing that Danny was curious about was the thing that the little people call the Man-Bird. It was, of course, an aëroplane and it had landed on the Green Meadows very near the home of Danny and Nanny Meadow Mouse. At first it had filled them both with a great fear, but when it had remained there without moving and without sound for a day and a night, Danny became more curious than timid.

He had discovered for himself that this Man-Bird was not a live creature. He had discovered that when none of those great two-legged creatures called Men were about, this great birdlike thing was powerless and wholly harmless. He was possessed of a great longing to climb up it. He wanted to go all over it. But, try as he would, he could find no way of climbing in.

After the landing of the machine, the aviator had taken a mass of cotton waste to wipe off the engine, and this he had tossed down on the ground when he was through with it. Now that cotton waste was just the nicest material in all the Great World for a Meadow Mouse bed. Danny had found it and had curled up in the middle of it, after he had given up trying to climb

up into that Man-Bird. In fact, Danny was sound asleep there when the aviator returned to his machine the next day. He saw the cotton waste on the ground and picking it up tossed it into the cockpit of the aëroplane. With it, of course, went Danny.

Never was there a more frightened Mouse than Danny Meadow Mouse. It had all happened so quickly that Danny didn't have the least idea what *had* happened. Now he found himself in a strange place and his one thought was to get out of sight. He scrambled out of the cotton waste. Right in front of him was a dark place. Danny darted into it. He was in a little cupboard, in which was more of that cotton waste. Danny crept under it and his little heart went pitapat, pitapat with fright. A few minutes later it almost stopped pitapatting. There was a terrible noise. Such a noise Danny had never heard, excepting when there was a thunderstorm. But this was worse than thunder, for it didn't stop. It was such a great noise that Danny didn't even hear the slamming of the little cupboard door when the aviator climbed in.

Two minutes later Danny Meadow Mouse was up in the air. He didn't know it, but he was up in the air, being carried away in that little cupboard of the aëroplane. For a long time Danny was too frightened by that terrible noise to even wonder where he was. He just made himself as small as possible at the back of that little cupboard under the cotton waste and wondered what would happen next.

He whimpered and cried a little, for he was a very little fellow, you know, and he was a prisoner. He felt the trembling of his prison, which was the vibration from the engine, and he in turn trembled.

By and by, after what seemed to Danny a very long time, but which really was only a little more than half an hour, the terrible noise ceased as suddenly as it had begun. There was a gentle bump or two and then the great Man-Bird came to a stop. Danny heard the voice of the aviator and the voices of other people who had gathered around. Presently the aviator opened the little cupboard door and pulled out some of that cotton waste. He didn't discover Danny, but he did leave the little door open.

Danny drew a long breath of the fresh air. Then he sniffed. That air was different from any air he had ever known before. He

ran his tongue along his lips and they tasted salt. Now Danny was as eager to get out as ever he had been to get in that great Man-Bird. It seemed to him that those people never would go away.

At last Danny no longer heard voices. He ventured to poke his head out. Then he went out altogether. There was no one in the great Man-Bird. Danny ran all about inside, for once more his curiosity had possession of him. Then he climbed up where he could look out on the Great World. He caught his breath. It wasn't at all the Great World he was used to. In two directions, as far as he could see, was shining sand. In front of him was water. He had never dreamed there could be so much water. It stretched away and away until it seemed to meet the sky. Back of him was what looked much like the Old Pasture at home. In the distance he could see the houses of those two-legged creatures called Men.

The sight of that water reminded Danny that he was very, very thirsty. He wanted a drink and he wanted it right away. Not far off he saw a little puddle of water. Anxiously he looked this way and that way. He saw no one to be afraid of. He jumped down from the aeroplane and ran swiftly through the coarse, stiff grass growing out of the sand. When he reached that puddle, he plunged his little nose in the water. He took one good swallow and then such a wry face as he made! My, my, my, such a wry face as Danny Meadow Mouse did make! You see, that water was salt. Danny was at the seashore. He didn't know it, but that is where he was.

"Bah!" exclaimed Danny in his squeaky little voice, and a disgusted little voice it was. Then he ran back into the grass, for he didn't dare stay out there in the open. That taste of salt water made him even thirstier than before. "Now what shall I do?" thought Danny. "I just must have food and water. I'll have to go exploring."

So Danny went exploring. Presently he came to a bathhouse, although of course he didn't know it was a bathhouse. There was fresh water there,—sweet, fresh water dripping from a faucet. A very little was all Danny needed. When he had had that little he felt like a new Meadow Mouse. He crept under the bathhouse. That seemed to be the safest place. He decided he would stay

there a while. He was filled with the spirit of adventure. Curiously enough, he never once thought of home. He didn't even wonder if he would ever get back there. Now that he was out in the Great World, he wanted to see more of it.

"There must be a lot to see here," said Danny right out loud, in that funny, squeaky voice of his.

"There is," said another voice close to him. It gave him such a start that he almost squealed aloud. When he discovered who the speaker was, he was more startled than before. It was a member of the Skunk family. Yes, sir, it was a member of the Skunk family. His coat was nearly all black. Danny scurried across to the other side, for he knew that a plump Meadow Mouse is sometimes enjoyed by members of the Skunk family.

"Who are you?" squeaked Danny.

"I'm Jimmy Skunk," replied his neighbor.

"You're not either!" squeaked Danny. "I left Jimmy Skunk back at Farmer Brown's, and he has a big, white stripe down the middle of his back."

"That's all right," replied the stranger goodnaturedly; "I may not be the Jimmy Skunk you know, but I'm Jimmy just the same. Anyway, that is what they call me. Who are you and where are you from?"

"I'm Danny Meadow Mouse and I came from the Green Meadows," replied Danny. And then he told how he happened to be there.

"Are you going to stay?" asked Jimmy. "If you have never been to the seashore, there is a lot to see here."

"I—I should like to see it," replied Danny. "I know all about the Green Meadows, but I don't know anything about the seashore. I don't know what to be afraid of, or what enemies to watch out for."

"Oh," replied Jimmy, "just you stay near me. Then you won't have anything to be afraid of." He spoke just as Jimmy Skunk back on the Green Meadows always spoke. It was clear to Danny that this Jimmy was just as independent as the other Jimmy.

"I guess it runs in the family," thought Danny. Aloud he said, "Aren't there any Hawks here?"

"Oh, there's one now and then," replied Jimmy carelessly.

“Aren’t there any Owls?” asked Danny.

“I suppose so, but they don’t bother me,” replied Jimmy.

“And what about Foxes?” demanded Danny.

“Oh, there are Foxes,” replied Jimmy Skunk. “You don’t suppose with such good living as can be found along the seashore, there would be no Foxes, do you? But don’t worry; just keep along with me and there’ll be nothing to fear.”

II. GETTING ACQUAINTED

BACK OF the bathhouse under which Danny Meadow Mouse had found shelter were sand dunes. Back of these sand dunes was an old pasture. This in turn ended on the edge of a great marsh. Just a little way from the bathhouse this marsh came almost to the sand dune. All this Danny learned in course of time. But for the rest of that day he was satisfied to curl up in a little hollow in the sand in the darkest corner under the bathhouse.

With the coming of the first Black Shadows Danny crept out. For a moment he sat there, testing the Merry Little Breezes. It was funny, but they left the same taste on his lips that he had found in that water where he had tried to get his first drink at the seashore. Every time he ran his tongue along his lips he tasted salt. He rather liked it.

Danny scrambled up a sand dune. It was the hardest scrambling he had ever done. You see, he slid back almost as fast as he went up. When at last he did get to the top, he was all out of breath and his legs ached. There he found the queerest grass he had ever seen. It didn't grow like the grass of the Green Meadows. The blades were far apart, coarse and stiff, and when he tried eating one he didn't like it. It had a sharp edge. The blades didn't grow close enough together to hide him and he felt very uncomfortable.

As soon as he could get his breath, Danny went on. By and by he reached what he called "real land." The grass was short, but it was real grass. There were patches of bushes here and there. In fact, this place was very like the Old Pasture back home. Danny felt more comfortable.

Presently Danny found an old log partly covered with dry seaweed, where the pasture joined the marsh. The old log was

hollow, but the only opening was a knothole so small that no one bigger than Danny could possibly get in. Danny went in and gave a little sigh of thankfulness. Then he carried in some bits of dry seaweed and some of the softest dry grass he could find. "Now," said he in that funny, squeaky little voice of his, "I have a new home at the seashore, and I am going to find out what it is like around here. Just one thing is needed to make me feel really at home."

Just then there was a sniffing sound at the end of the log and a familiar scent reached Danny's nose. It was the scent of a Fox. Danny chuckled down inside himself. "Now," said he, "I *do* feel at home. If only Nanny were here, it would be perfect." For a wee minute he felt a bit lonely.

As soon as it was safe to do so, Danny started out exploring. In the excitement of doing this he forgot all about Nanny. First he made a little passage for himself under the dry seaweed along the old log. Then he cut a little path down to the edge of the marsh. All along the edge of the marsh were masses of dry seaweed which had been stranded there by a high tide. Never had Danny found it so easy to keep under cover. In running from one mass of seaweed to another, he had to expose himself for only a moment.

Finally Danny ventured out to see what the marsh was like. It looked very like the Green Meadows back home, for it was covered with grass. However, when Danny tasted that grass, he found it very different from the grass he was used to. It tasted a wee bit salt. He rather liked it. There was no sweet clover. The grass was tall enough for him to feel well protected, so he started in at once to cut little paths. The ground was rather wet. Day by day and night by night Danny carried his little paths farther out into the marsh.

Danny actually begrudged time to sleep. You see, he was all the time finding new and strange things. On the sand at the edge of the marsh were curious little creatures called Beach Fleas or Sand Hoppers, and he found them in the grass too. They made him think of giant Fleas. He soon discovered that they were good to eat, so after that he did not have to depend on grass alone. Then, when he had explored a little farther, he

found that there were tiny shellfish, also good to eat when small enough for his sharp teeth to crack them open.

Twice every day the water came creeping, creeping up over the marsh. Sometimes it quite covered the grass. Other times just the tops of the grasses were above it. Then after a short time all that water would disappear. It was the coming and going, or rising and falling, as it is called, of the tide. Sometimes after the tide had fallen, Danny would find that it had left behind it more of these little shellfish. Occasionally, very tiny fish would be left stranded in little pools. Then Danny turned fisherman.

When he wanted a complete change, all he had to do was to go up on the high land back of the marsh. There he found seeds and berries and sweet grasses, such as he had been used to at home. Altogether, Danny liked the seashore. He liked it very much.

Every day when the tide went out, Danny would return to the marsh. Always there was something new to see. Sometimes he would come to little pools, and looking into them he would see minnows darting in all directions. Then one day a little path that he was making suddenly opened on to a broad patch of mud. Danny sat there at the end of his little path, looking out. The mud was brown, almost black. Not a single spear of grass was growing there. It was very soft in most places and out in the middle a little water was standing.

“That is no place for me,” thought Danny. “There isn’t a thing to hide under. Anyway, it isn’t interesting. I don’t believe there is anything out there that I want, or that anybody else wants.”

“Pee-eet, pee-eet, pee-eet,” said a voice right over his head.

Danny looked up to see a bird that reminded him of Teeter the Sandpiper, whom he had seen along the Smiling Pool. In fact, at first he thought it was Teeter. But when he had had a good look, he saw that it was a stranger. It was, if anything, a little smaller than Teeter and it was not spotted as was Teeter. Danny remembered that Teeter’s legs were yellow, while the legs of this fellow were rather greenish.

“Pee-eet!” said the stranger, who had alighted and was running about rapidly and continually picking up something from the mud.



GREATER YELLOWLEGS OR TATTLER.

Totanus melanoleucus.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER OR SANDPEEP.

Ereanetes pusillus.

LEAST SANDPIPER OR MUD-PEEP.

Pisobia minutilla.

“Who are you?” demanded Danny in his squeaky little voice, when the stranger came near enough.

The little stranger stopped abruptly and stared very hard at Danny. “I am Peep the Least Sandpiper,” said he.

“Then you must be cousin to Teeter the Spotted Sandpiper,” said Danny.

Peep nodded. “I am,” said he. “There are many of us Sandpiper cousins. Cousin Teeter seems to like the fresh water best, but give me the mudflats on the salt marshes and the sand of the shore at low tide. Excuse me, I’m very hungry and I hear some of my family coming. I must get what I can while I can.”

A moment later Danny saw a whole flock, each of whom looked exactly like Peep. Their wings were long and narrow. They turned in the air together so exactly that it looked as if they must have been trained to do it. They saw Peep running about on the mudflat and immediately alighted and all began to run about. It was fun to watch them. They would make little short runs this way and little short runs that way. Then down would go their slender bills and Danny knew that something good to eat had been found. They ran along the very edge of the water and all over that mudpatch. They seemed to be having a splendid time. Such busy little people Danny had never seen. He was tempted to go out and try to get better acquainted, but just as he started to do this, away they all went, crying “Pee-eet, pee-eet,” and Danny was left to stare after them.

“Well, anyway, I’ve made the acquaintance of some of the shore people,” thought Danny. “I wish they had stayed and let me talk to them. There’s such a lot I want to know, and however am I going to find out things if I cannot ask questions? Now, I wonder who that is whistling. It isn’t Farmer Brown’s Boy, because Farmer Brown’s Boy isn’t at the seashore. But it is just as loud a whistle as Farmer Brown’s Boy’s. Hello, I do believe it is up in the air!”