



BETTER THAN TEETH

THREE hunters, a stoat, a weasel, and a polecat, agreed to live together and to share the spoils of their hunting. They took possession of a deserted badger's earth, and having closed the exit until it was but a small narrow passage, they set themselves to make it cosy.

While they were still hard at work they were visited by a ferret, who had escaped from a gamekeeper's cottage, and who begged them to allow him to be one of their little family. The three agreed, and with the help of the ferret, who worked hardest of all, they soon had their new home snug and comfortable.

For a time all went well with the four friends. They hunted together and brought their captures home to be devoured in comfort. Soon their den became very untidy and dirty and so they had to make a different plan. Three only would go hunting while the fourth stayed at home to tidy up. They agreed to take turns at this irksome task in order that all should share and share alike.

By day, the four slept together, for they were all night-hunters. At dusk three would set off, and return

again before day-break. This second plan did not last long, as they soon tired of having to stay at home every fourth night. Each of them was a hunter and each loved hunting above all things; and each of them equally hated keeping house.

They sat talking it over very gloomily, when suddenly the weasel exclaimed, "Why, what stupid we are! It's a servant we need. Whom shall we get?"

"You can't beat a rabbit for a servant," growled the polecat; "they are respectful, clean, and hard-working."

"That's true," agreed the others, while the ferret added with a chuckle, "and as a rabbit does not like the food we eat, she won't steal from our larder."

The very next evening they captured a rabbit, and dragging her to their lair, told her that in future she was to be their servant.



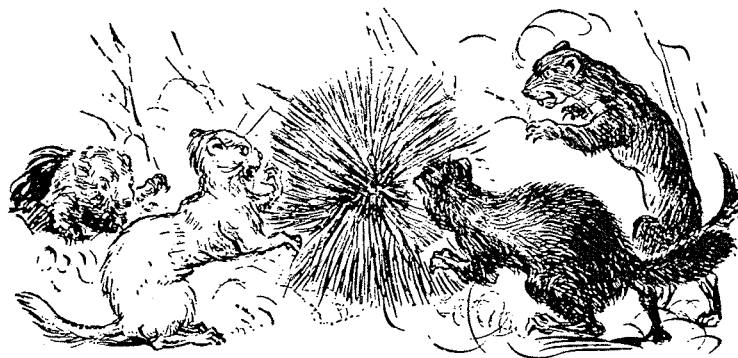
The poor rabbit, overjoyed to discover she was not to be killed, was only too happy to agree, and promised to serve them faithfully and well. "You'd better!" they snarled in a dreadful chorus, glaring out of their red eyes, and showing their cruel fangs. The rabbit, however, was as good as her word, and a better servant than she proved to be would have been hard to find.

But the four hunters were not a bit grateful, and indeed the more she did, the more they expected of her. Moreover, they gave her so little leisure that often she had no time to get anything to eat. When she did go out for food, just before dawn and just after sunset, one of the four always came with her to see that she did not escape. Always they hurried and hustled her, and snapped and snarled at her, so that she was only able to nibble a few clover leaves.

The rabbit grew thin, and sick, and weary. She was always hungry and always tired. She longed to escape, but could find no means of doing so, for once again only three of the killers went hunting, leaving one at home as guardian. But the one whose turn it was to stay at home did not mind, as he only rested and watched the rabbit work.

One evening, just after the others had set off to hunt, the weasel, who was staying at home that night, closed his eyes for a short nap. The rabbit poked her head out of the hole for a breath of fresh air, and with the faint hope in her heart that some clover leaves might be growing within reach.

A hedgehog came waddling along and said very



pleasantly to the rabbit. "Evening, Longears! Going for a little stroll?"

"Alas!" said the rabbit sadly, "strolls are not for me; I am a servant, with the four most cruel masters in the world." And she told the friendly hedgehog all her woeful tale.

The hedgehog bristled all his spines in sympathy. "I wouldn't put up with it!" he snapped.

"Shush! You'll wake the weasel," whispered the rabbit fearfully.

"Pah! You're too timid," went on the hedgehog.

"It's all very well for you to talk," said the rabbit; "but if you were their captive you'd do no more than I, for you are no fighter either."

"Quite correct," chuckled the hedgehog; "I'm no fighter I know, but I'm something better than that."

"What?" asked the rabbit.

"I'm a sitter-tight," giggled the hedgehog; "and sitting tight is better than fighting."

"You're lucky to be able to," went on the rabbit glumly ; "but that doesn't help me."

"Cheer up!" said the hedgehog, "perhaps my power to sit tight may be able to help you. Now, tell me, do your masters ever stay at home, all at the same time?"

"Why, yes," replied the rabbit, "nearly always during the daytime they're in together and mostly asleep. But I can't get away as the least noise awakens them."

"But could you manage to slip out before they could stop you?" asked the hedgehog.

"Yes," replied the rabbit, "but it would be of little use, for they can all run faster than I, and would recapture me and kill me before I had gone a dozen hops."

"Now, don't be so timid," continued the hedgehog, "but trust me. Tomorrow, when they are all asleep, you slip out and leave the rest to Brother Hedgehog!" The hedgehog then gave such a chuckle of laughter that the rabbit scurried back inside the den, lest the weasel should awaken from his nap.

For all her fear, however, the bold words of the hedgehog had given the rabbit so much courage that, on the morrow, when her masters were asleep, she slipped out. The noise awoke the sleepers ; but, before they could follow her, the hedgehog outside had rolled himself up into a ball, and wedged himself into the hole.

The four furious hunters pricked their noses many

times against the hedgehog's spines before they gave up the attempt to remove him and began to dig around him. By the time they managed to get out, the rabbit had vanished. They turned furiously towards the hedgehog, who still lay in a spiny ball.

"We'll kill you for this!" they snarled in rage.

"Kill away!" giggled the hedgehog, safely rolled up, "kill away, my pretty ones ; don't let me stop you."

"We'll have you when you unroll!" screamed the polecat.

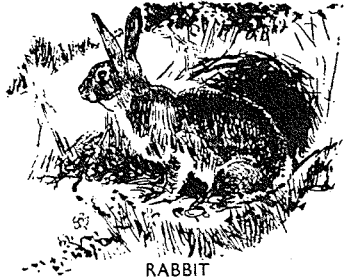
"I shouldn't be a bit surprised," replied the hedgehog, "but as I'm just going off into my long sleep, and that lasts five months, I should think that you'll get tired of waiting."

This was not true, for the hedgehog only sleeps his long sleep in winter ; but the savage hunters did not know this, and after waiting a little longer, they growled and went in to finish their sleep.

Soon after, very cautiously, the hedgehog unrolled, and finding the coast clear, darted off and was soon out of sight. When some nights later the hedgehog met the escaped rabbit, and she overwhelmed him with thanks, the hedgehog just chuckled and said, "Don't mention it, Young Longears, but remember that fighters don't always win."

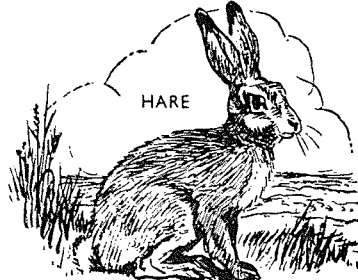
From "Forty More Tales," by Stephen Southwold.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT ANIMALS OF OUR COUNTRYSIDE



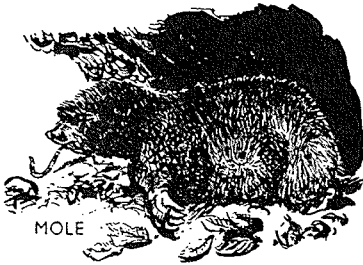
RABBIT

1. The RABBIT is a very shy timid creature who lives by eating green food. He dwells with a large number of his own kind in a home called a BURROW or WARREN. He has very keen hearing and scent and runs at the first sign of danger.



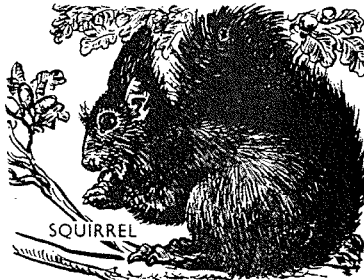
HARE

2. The HARE is a lonely fellow who grazes from dusk to dawn. His home is an open grass nest termed a FORM. He is a very fast runner. A young baby hare is called a LEVERET.



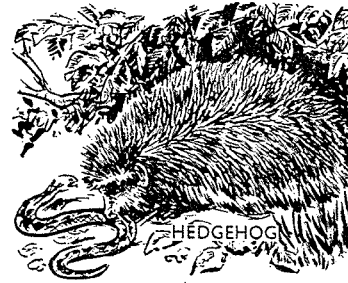
MOLE

3. The MOLE lives underground in a large nest with many tunnels leading from it. His home is called a FORTRESS. He is seldom seen as he hunts for worms and insect grubs below the surface of the earth.



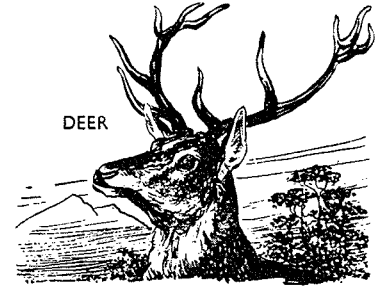
SQUIRREL

4. The SQUIRREL is a timid bushy-tailed little creature who feeds on fruits and nuts. He is noted for careful storing of food for the winter. His home, called a DREY, is a comfortable birdlike nest built in the branches of a tree.



HEDGEHOG

5. The HEDGEHOG feeds on insects, eggs, slugs, frogs, and young birds. He rests by day, hunts by night, and goes to sleep for the winter. He lives in a little nest-like burrow. When frightened or attacked he rolls himself up into a spiny ball.



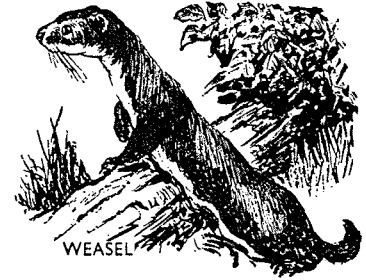
DEER

6. The DEER, largest of our British wild animals, lives in lonely forests and moorlands. He is a timid creature and fond of company of his own kind. A baby deer is called a FAWN.



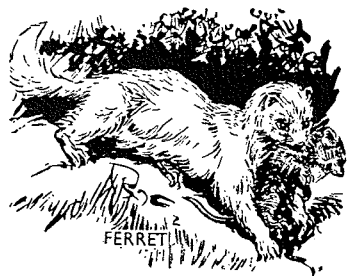
STOAT

7. The STOAT is a savage hunter who seeks his prey both by day and by night. In cold countries his coat becomes pure white in winter and is valued as a fur (ermine)

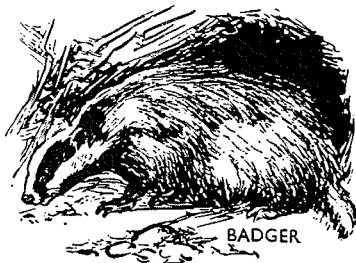


WEASEL

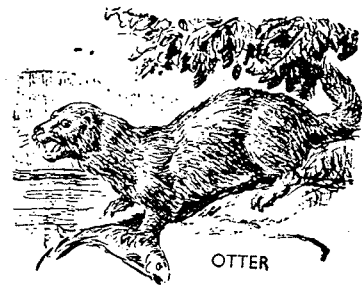
8. The WEASEL is a fearless hunter of birds, rabbits, mice, and rats. He is not unlike a stoat in appearance and dwells in a hollow tree; a dry stone wall; or a hole in a bank.



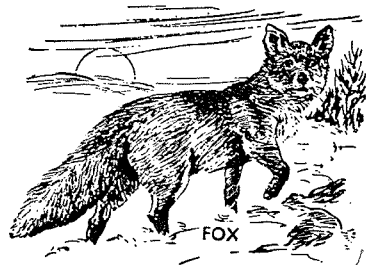
9. The **FERRET** is tamed and used to hunt rats and rabbits. He enters the burrows and chases the scared rabbits into nets placed at the mouths of the holes.



10. The **BADGER** is a cautious animal who hunts at night-time. His prey consists of young birds, snakes, moles and rabbits. He sleeps most of the winter in his home which is called a **SETT** or **EARTH**.



11. The **OTTER** dwells near streams, lakes, and the sea-coast. He has webbed feet and is a fine swimmer. He hunts at night in search of food which consists mainly of fish. His home resembles a rabbit's burrow and is called a **HOLT**.



12. The **FOX** is the most cunning and crafty hunter of our countryside. He comes out at night to search for rabbits, hares, chickens, and young lambs. His home is a large burrow in the ground called an **EARTH**.

QUESTIONS ON THE STORY.

1. Give the title of the story.
2. How many hunters were there at first?
3. What were their names?
4. Where did they live?
5. What other animal joined them later?

6. What duty annoyed them very much?
7. What happened to their den as a result of their laziness?
8. When did they hunt?
9. Who was forced to become their housekeeper?
10. How did they treat their servant?
11. Why did the rabbit not try to escape?
12. Which friendly animal met and spoke to the rabbit?
13. What was his greeting?
14. What reply did the rabbit make?
15. What did the hedgehog say was better than fighting?
16. Why did the rabbit not run away?
17. What did the hedgehog tell the rabbit to do?
18. Where did the hedgehog wedge himself?
19. How did the prickly little animal outwit the angry hunters?
20. What was the moral of the story?

QUESTIONS ON THE INTERESTING FACTS.

1. (a) What is the name of a rabbit's home?
- (b) How does he generally escape from his enemies?
2. (a) Name a hare's home.
- (b) What is a baby hare called?
3. (a) What is a mole's home termed?
- (b) Why is a mole seldom seen?
4. (a) Name a squirrel's home.
- (b) How does he prepare for the winter?
5. Why is it dangerous to attack a hedgehog?
6. (a) Which is the largest British wild animal?
- (b) What is a baby deer called?
7. What name is given to the white winter fur of the stoat?
8. Where does a weasel generally live?
9. For what purpose are tamed ferrets used?
10. What does a badger do in winter?
11. Where would you expect to find an otter?
12. (a) The fox is a very ——— animal.
- (b) What name is given to his home?

DEVELOPMENT EXERCISES

- How do the following creatures defend themselves or attack their enemies :—dog, cat, cow, horse, elephant, bee, snake, bear ?
- The ferret escaped from a gamekeeper's cottage.
 - What is a gamekeeper's work ?
 - Why did the gamekeeper keep a ferret ?
 - What name is given to a person who secretly traps and steals rabbits ?
- A number of rabbits together is called a "nest." What name is given to a number of :—sheep, cattle, wolves, deer, cubs, chickens ?
- The hedgehog was covered with "spines." What covering has each of the following :—sheep, horse, rabbit, bird, fish, porcupine ?
- We say "As brave as a lion." Complete the following with names of animals :—
 - As fat as a ———.
 - As cunning as a ———.
 - As timid as a ———.
 - As fast as a ———.
 - As quiet as a ———.
 - As stupid as a ———.
 - As frisky as a ———.
 - As strong as a ———.
- Name the underground homes of the following :—rabbit, fox, mole, hedgehog, badger, otter.
- "Longears" was the name which the hedgehog gave to the rabbit. Which animal would you call :—Jumbo, Pussy, Jacko, Bruin, Fido, Dobbin ?
- What do the following sentences mean ?
 - The hedgehog waited till the coast was clear.
 - The rabbit was in hot water.
 - The hedgehog was playing with fire.
 - The rabbit was down in the mouth.



AN ENCOUNTER WITH A SHARK

(*THE CORAL ISLAND*, written by R. M. Ballantyne, describes the adventures of Ralph Rover, Jack Martin, and Peterkin Gray, shipmates on the sailing-ship "Arrow." Their vessel became a total wreck in a terrible storm but the three chums managed to reach an uninhabited island, where they lived for some time. The following story tells of an exciting fishing adventure on the island shortly after their ship was wrecked.)

ONE day Peterkin came up from the beach, where he had been fishing, and said in a very cross voice, "I'll tell you what, Jack, I'm not going to be humbugged with catching such tiny little fish any longer. I want you to swim out with me on your back, and let me fish in deep water!"

"Dear me, Peterkin!" replied Jack, "I had no idea you were taking your fishing so much to heart, or I would have tried to get you out of your difficulty long ago. What do you say to building a boat?"

"That would take far too long," was the reply; "I can't be bothered waiting for weeks and weeks. I would like to start at once."