

Little Bear at Work and at Play

Frances Margaret Fox

Beside the spring were a number of Little Bear's old friends dressed in green satin coats, who were playing leapfrog. They asked Little Bear to play with them, and soon he was showing the frogs what long leaps he could make. And then, in a little while, many baby rabbits came and joined in the fun. The next that Little Bear knew, he was chasing baby rabbits over the rocks and catching nuts that the squirrels threw to him from the tree tops and having a joyful playtime.

Click on the story you want to read

[WHEN LITTLE BEAR BRAGGED](#)

[WHEN MOTHER SKUNK HELPED LITTLE BEAR](#)

[THREE BEARS COME TO BREAKFAST](#)

WHEN LITTLE BEAR BRAGGED

One rainy day the three bears were sitting by the fire in their comfortable house in the woods, telling stories. First Father Bear would tell a story, and then Mother Bear would tell a story, and then Father Bear would have a turn again. Between times Little Bear asked questions. The three were happy and merry until Mother Bear told the old story about the race between the hare and the tortoise, and how the slow-going tortoise was the first to reach the goal because the hare took a nap and did not wake up until after the tortoise had passed him and had won the race.

“You see,” Mother Bear explained, “the hare was so sure he could win that he did not even try to reach the goal quickly. He was so swift-footed that he thought he could go to sleep if he chose and still come out ahead of the patient tortoise.”

“Wasn't he silly!” exclaimed Little Bear. “If I were going to run a race with Grandpa Tortoise, I should go this way until I reached the goal!” And Little Bear pranced up and down the room until he made even the porridge bowls rattle in the cupboard. “I guess I should know enough to know that Grandpa Tortoise would keep stepping ahead and stepping ahead and get to the goal in time! You would not catch me taking any naps if I started out to run a race with anyone! No, sir-ree!”

Mother Bear laughed heartily, but Father Bear looked very solemn. He did not like to hear Little Bear brag at all.

“So you think, Son Bear,” said he, “that, if you should run a race with Grandpa Tortoise, you would be wiser than our old friend, Peter Hare? Is that what you mean?”

“I know I should,” bragged Little Bear. “I'd say, 'Good-by, Grandpa Tortoise!' and off I'd start, and I should beat him before he had time to think. Then, afterward, if I were sleepy and wanted to, I should take a nap.”

“Very well,” said Father Bear, “I shall see Grandpa Tortoise, and if he is willing to run a race with a silly little fellow like you, you shall have your chance, and Peter Hare shall be the judge.”

So it came about that, when the rain was over, the friends of the Three Bears and of the hare and the tortoise met in the woods to see the fun.

Little Bear noticed that, before the race began, the hare and the tortoise were laughing about something, but he did not even wonder what it was. He had nothing to worry about.

At last the word was given: “One, two, three, go!”

Away went the tortoise, slow and easy. Off started Little Bear, running so fast that he was out of breath before he had passed the first oak tree, and was glad to stop a second and have a drink of dew from an acorn cup that Friend Treetoad offered him.

“Thank you,” remarked Little Bear, as he returned the cup, “but that was not enough. I shall have to step over to the spring.”

“Remember how the hare lost the race,” Friend Treetoad warned him.

“Oh, I shall not go to sleep,” answered Little Bear, “and, really, Grandpa Tortoise walks slower than I thought he did.”

Beside the spring were a number of Little Bear's old friends dressed in green satin coats, who were playing leapfrog. They asked Little Bear to play with them, and soon he was showing the frogs what long leaps he could make. And then, in a little while, many baby rabbits came and joined in the fun. The next that Little Bear knew, he was chasing baby rabbits over the rocks and catching nuts that the squirrels threw to him from the tree tops and having a joyful playtime.

An hour passed quickly, and then Little Bear suddenly remembered that he had started out to run a race. Back he ran to the path and away he flew toward the goal, while the baby rabbits

laughed and danced and danced and laughed. Father Bear had sent them to play with Little Bear, but they did not know why he had sent them until that minute.

Stepping along, stepping along, slowly but surely, Grandpa Tortoise had reached the goal, just as he had in the long-ago day when he ran the race with the hare. Little Bear, as he came near the goal, heard the neighbours shouting, "Hurrah for the champion! Hurrah for the champion! Hurrah for Grandpa Tortoise!" Even Father Bear was shouting.

Little Bear remembered his manners and, as his father had told him what to do if he lost the race, straightway walked up and shook hands with Grandpa Tortoise. And the hare, although he must have been laughing in his sleeve, remembered his manners, too, and did not let anyone see him laugh.

After that the old friends and neighbours went home with the Three Bears to eat blackberries and honey and to tell stories round the fire. Grandpa Tortoise went too. He had travelled so slowly that he was not even tired. Little Bear asked a few questions, as usual, that afternoon when the stories were told, but he did not brag. And when Peter Hare winked at him once or twice he laughed.

WHEN MOTHER SKUNK HELPED LITTLE BEAR

Once upon a time Little Bear went for a long walk along the river path. He was alone, and so did not know that he had gone far from home until Father Kingfisher saw him and called: "It is time for you to turn round and go back, Little Bear! You must remember that it will soon be dark in the woods, and you might get lost, for you have no wings with which to fly home quickly."

Little Bear looked for the sun. Sure enough, it was sinking behind the trees and leaving a long, shining trail on the river. It was time to go home.

"Thank you, Father Kingfisher," answered Little Bear. "I was having such a good time that I forgot I was far from our little house, but I shall run back fast now. So good night!"

And away he ran. But before he had passed more than three bends of the river he saw a man fishing, and in the woods near by was a tent, with a bright camp fire burning, and beside the camp fire, a man cleaning a gun.

Little Bear was so frightened that he sat down and cried. Mother Skunk heard him, for she and her six children were out hunting beetles for supper.

"What is the trouble?" she asked. "What is the matter, Little Bear?"

Little Bear told her about the two men, one on either side of his path. "And I am afraid to go by them!" he wailed.

"Come, come, child, dry your eyes," said Mother Skunk. "You have always been kind to my children, and now I will take care of you. Stop crying and follow me."

"But won't the men catch you?" asked Little Bear.

"Oh, no," answered Mother Skunk, "They will not touch us. You follow me. Come, children."

On walked Mother Skunk, slowly and comfortably, with Little Bear and her six pretty children following one behind another, as she had told them to do.

When the man who was fishing saw Mother Skunk walking by with her children and Little Bear, he sat still as a mouse. All he did was wink. The man by the fire stopped cleaning his gun when he saw Mother Skunk walking by with her children and Little Bear, and he, too, sat still as a mouse.

All he did was wink. "Now, Little Bear," said Mother Skunk, when they had gone a few steps more, "The children and I will stay here a while and catch beetles, but you must run along home. The men will not trouble you while we are in their path, never fear!" "I thank you, Mother Skunk!" Little Bear called over his shoulder, as he pit-patted for home as fast as he could travel. And when he reached home, he told what had happened to him and walked up and down in front of the fireplace to show Father Bear and Mother Bear how Mother Skunk had walked past the two big men, as if she were not afraid of anyone in the woods. And how the Three Bears laughed!

But when Mother Bear tucked Little Bear into bed that night, she kissed him and said:

"Let us always be thankful for good, kind friends!"

One morning when Little Bear wanted to play, his mother sent him out to pull weeds in the blackberry patch. When his mother went out to see how he was getting on, she found him lying on the ground and looking at the sky.

"Little Bear," said his mother, "Have you finished your weeding?"

"No, Mother Bear," was the answer, "It is too hard work. I shall pull no more weeds."

Never before had Mother Bear heard Little Bear speak like that. So she took him by the hand and led him into the house, where Father Bear sat in his big chair.

"Father Bear," she said, "Little Bear will not work." Then behind Little Bear's back she made motions that meant, "But please do not spank him!"

“Ah-hum! Ah-hum!” began Father Bear, gazing hard at Little Bear. “Do I understand that you will not pull weeds, Son Bear?”

“It is too hard work,” explained Little Bear. “I am not big enough to pull weeds in the blackberry patch.”

“Ah-hum! Ah-hum!” repeated Father Bear, who was really too surprised at first for words. Then he said, “Son Bear, I ought to spank you and send you out to work, and that is what I will do if your mother is willing. But—” Father Bear said “But” in such a loud, loud voice that Little Bear jumped at the tone. “But little bears who will not pull weeds in the blackberry patch shall not eat blackberries.” So upstairs went Little Bear, followed by his mother, who carried a plate of bread and a brown pitcher full of water from the spring. Mother Bear said nothing when she left Little Bear upstairs with the bread and the water, but he did not mind that, because at first he thought it was all a joke. At dinner time, when he smelled fish frying he felt hungry. But his mother did not bring him any fish, and his father said nothing. So Little Bear ate bread and drank water.

The afternoon lasted a long, long time. Little Bear was asleep when his mother brought him more bread and water.

When he awoke, he again smelled fish frying. He felt hungry, but still his mother did not bring him any fish, and his father said nothing. Then he called his mother and his father.

“What is the trouble with Son Bear?” inquired Father Bear, when Mother Bear led the little fellow downstairs.

“I am hungry!” wailed Little Bear.

“Have you no bread?” asked Father Bear.

“I cannot eat just bread,” answered Little Bear, “not when I smell fish. Besides, I am lonesome. I will weed the blackberry patch and the whole garden, and I’ll hoe the corn, and I’ll work like Sally Beaver, if you’ll just let me have fish for my supper, and blackberries, and honey, and milk.”

“Very well, Son Bear,” agreed Father Bear. “You shall sit down to supper, and weed the blackberry patch before dark.”

Little Bear passed his plate, and Father Bear filled it with trout, and mashed potatoes, and currant jelly. Mother Bear passed him the johnnycake, and gave him a big dish of blackberries and a brown mug full of milk.

Little Bear was so hungry that he ate two whole speckled trout, and five pieces of johnnycake, and three heaping dishes of blackberries, and drank two mugfuls of milk before he went out and weeded the blackberry patch. He was tired when he went to bed that night, and on many other nights afterward, but he said nothing about it, nor did he ever stop his work in the garden until he had done it all as well as he could. For he soon found out that when he had worked hard, even bread and water tasted good, but that when he had not worked, there was no taste in fish, or honey, or milk, or in a heaping dish of blackberries. Last summer Little Bear went on a long journey with his father and mother. The Three Bears had a beautiful time travelling through the big forest until they reached the banks of a deep, swift river. Then there was trouble, for Little Bear could not swim, nor did he wish to learn how to swim. He said he was afraid of the water.

“Father Bear can easily carry me over the river,” he suggested.

“Nonsense!” replied big Father Bear in gruff tones. “Nonsense, my son! You are old enough and strong enough to learn to swim. I will not carry you across the stream. Neither shall your mother.”

Just then there came Father Otter, swimming like a seal, and twisting and turning in the water like a fish.

“Perhaps the good otter will teach Little Bear to swim,” Mother Bear said, and then called to him.

“It is the easiest thing in the world to teach a little bear how to swim,” answered Father Otter. “Just throw him in!” And away he went, laughing over his shoulder.

“He must be joking,” observed Mother Bear quickly, because she was afraid that Father Bear would toss Little Bear into the river, and she did not like the idea.

At that moment Mother Otter came swimming down the river with her children. One of them climbed upon her shoulders and stared solemnly at Little Bear on the river bank.

“Good morning!” said Mother Bear.

“Good morning!” answered Mother Otter.

“Your children are fine swimmers,” added Mother Bear.

“Certainly,” answered Mother Otter. “Every one of them knows that our people have all been famous swimmers for centuries.”

“I suppose, then,” ventured Mother Bear, “that your children were born swimmers. You probably had trouble in keeping them out of the water when they were babies.”

Mother Otter laughed. “The trouble was to get them into the water,” she said, “because the silly little things were afraid. All young otters are afraid of the water and have to be put into it by force.”

“You do not mean it!” exclaimed Mother Bear, with great amazement in her tones.

“Indeed I do,” replied Mother Otter. “We had to push every one of our children into the water. Does Little Bear know how to swim?”

“No,” answered Mother Bear, shaking her head, “he is afraid to try.”

“Duck him,” advised Mother Otter, “duck him. There is no other way to teach a little bear to swim.”

And away she went, down the stream, intending to overtake Father Otter.

The little Otters kept looking back, hoping to see Father Bear toss Little Bear into the river.

But Mother Bear begged him not to teach Little Bear to swim that day, and so the little Otters missed the fun.

That night the Three Bears camped beside the deep, swift river. After Little Bear was cuddled down in his bed of leaves and springy boughs, Mother Bear made Father Bear promise not to toss Little Bear into the river unless Little Bear said he wanted him to.

The next morning Father Bear was sorry that he had made the promise, because an honest-looking polecat who came across the stream and went into the woods told Father Bear and Mother Bear that the largest, sweetest blackberries in the forest were ripe on the other shore.

“And now,” whispered Mother Bear to Father Bear, “aren't you sorry that you told him that we wouldn't carry him over?”

“Sure enough, I am,” agreed Father Bear. And then he laughed at the joke on himself.

“Well,” suggested Mother Bear at last, “I shall coax Little Bear to let you toss him gently into the river, and I shall catch him if he finds he cannot swim.”

“Nonsense!” grumbled Father Bear, and stopped laughing. “While you coax,” he said, “I shall go for a walk.”

Coaxing did not do any good. When Little Bear saw his father wander away, he told his mother that he did not feel like going into the water that morning. He hoped she would please excuse him. And so she excused him.

Soon Father Bear came back, smiling and happy. “I have found a bridge,” said he. “An old log has fallen across the river a little way upstream, where, on the other side, blackberries are almost as big as ducks' eggs. Little Bear can walk across on the log.”

“All right, I'll do it,” promised Little Bear, and gladly followed his father until the Three Bears reached the bridge.

But while Little Bear was skipping joyfully over the log, trying to reach the opposite bank before his father and mother could swim across, the log turned over and sent Little Bear head first into the river. Fortunately, he knew enough to keep his mouth shut, and in a little while

he bobbed up, shaking his head to get the water out of his eyes and his ears and paddling like a duck. That was all there was to it, because, ever after, Little Bear could swim.

Mother Bear believes to this day that Father Bear knew that the log would roll over. She believes it because, whenever anyone asks him, he says nothing, but just laughs.

One morning, while Little Bear was out camping with his father and mother, he went into the woods to pick daisies and bluebells with which to decorate the entrance to their cave. His hands were full of flowers, and he was ready to go back with them to his mother, when he heard a baby crying. Little Bear stood still and listened. Then he knew that the child who was crying was an Otter baby. He had heard Otter babies cry before.

“What is the matter, baby one?” called Little Bear. “What are you crying about and where are you? Did you bump your nose?”

“I am lost! Come and find me!” answered Baby Otter.

“You are hiding behind the oak stump!” exclaimed Little Bear, as he scrambled through the thicket and fairly pounced upon Baby Otter. “I spy!” he shouted.

“It isn't a game!” wailed the Otter baby. “I tell you I am lost! I don't know where my mother went and I can't find my father! I want to go home. Oh, boo-hoo-hoo!”

“There, there, don't cry!” said Little Bear. “Tell me where your camp is, and I will take you home just as fast as we can go.”

“But we do not live here!” complained the lost baby. “Our home is Brookside, a long way off across country, and we are only camping out, and I do not know where our camp is! Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo!”

“Come, come, cheer up!” said Little Bear, using the very words his father often used when speaking to him. “I tell you I will take you home, and if it is too far away I'll ask my father to go. We are camping out, ourselves, down the river a little way. Now tell me how you happened to get lost.”

So the Otter baby told him that the Otter family had gone out together after breakfast that morning, and that while they were laughing and chatting Baby Otter had strayed away from the path to pick flowers. The next thing that he knew he had been alone, and, not knowing what else to do, he had sat down and cried.

“Well, wipe your eyes now, and give me your paw!” said Little Bear in big, grown-up tones.

“My father showed me your camp only yesterday, and, if you are one of the campers, you live only a little way from here and I can take you home.”

Of course Baby Otter wiped his eyes and walked happily behind Little Bear. He wished to travel in single file, Otter fashion.

It happened that Father Bear had been teaching Little Bear how to follow the woods trails, and Little Bear knew the Otters' path, because they always went round stumps and under logs; besides, their legs were short and their bodies so heavy they left well-worn trails behind them.

At last Little Bear reached the end of the crooked path, and Baby Otter, without so much as saying “Thank you!” to Little Bear, ran to the cave by the river bank where his family was camping out.

“Some people always forget their manners,” said Little Bear to himself, as he ran home to tell his father and mother what he had done.

“I am glad you were good to the baby,” said Little Bear's mother, as she took the bluebells and daisies that he had brought and put them into a hollow stump beside the cave door. She had filled the stump with water from the spring while Little Bear was gone.

“The flowers are lovely!” said Mother Bear. “Now please run into the woods for some green leaves and vines to put with them, Little Bear.”

Before he could do as she told him, Uncle John Kingfisher came flying to invite the Three Bears to a party. “The Otters,” said he, “request your presence at a fish dinner. Come now.”

“We thank you, Uncle John Kingfisher,” said Father Bear. “We will start at once. Come, Little Bear, wash your hands and face and get ready.”

That is how it came about that the Three Bears dined with the Otters that day, on trout, salmon, and eels, and were served with only one bite from each fish, and that bite taken from the meat just behind the head. Mother Bear thought that the Otters chose only one dainty morsel from each fish just because they had invited company for dinner. But Father Bear told her afterward that she was mistaken; Otters always serve fish in that way when fish are plentiful.

After dinner the Otters and their guests rested for a while, and then Father Otter urged the children to come out and play with him and with Mother Otter. Much surprised, the Three Bears followed the Otters to their playground. And the next Father Bear and Mother Bear knew, Little Bear was sliding down the Otters' toboggan slide and shouting with glee. All the Otters went down that slide, one behind the other, and landed splashety-splash! in the river below.

It was a wonderful sight to see the Otters swimming about in the stream, because they are beautiful swimmers. But what Father and Mother Bear liked best was the picture of Little Bear running up the roundabout path to the top of the bank and going down the slide three times as fast as the Otter children and their parents. The Otters were more at home in the water than Little Bear was, but they could not run on land as he could.

Their next game they played with sticks. One Otter took the end of a stick in his mouth and another Otter took the other end, and then they pulled and pulled to see which was the stronger. Little Bear did not like that game so well as he did the toboggan slide.

“We have had a delightful time at your party,” said Mother Bear to Mother Otter, at last, “and we thank you for inviting us over. If you ever wander into our home woods, come to our little house and have porridge with us.”

“We shall be glad to do so,” said Mother Otter, “and we shall always think kindly of Little Bear because he brought our baby home when he was lost. If we do go to visit you, you must let us make Little Bear a toboggan slide.”

“Ask them to come as soon as we get home!” urged Little Bear in a whisper to his mother so loud that the Otter children heard it, and laughed.

And that night Little Bear dreamed of taking home a baby otter and of being invited to slide down that baby otter's toboggan slide all the afternoon.

Once in midsummer when wild roses were blooming along the river bank behind the Three Bears' house in the forest and wild birds were singing from every thicket, Father Bear built a raft and took his family floating downstream. The raft was made of logs firmly fastened together. It was big and strong, and had three rustic chairs on it—a big, big chair for the big Father Bear, a middle-sized chair for middle-sized Mother Bear, and a wee, wee chair for wee Little Bear. There were also poles to keep the raft from bumping against the river bank: a rather heavy pole made just for huge Father Bear, a middle-sized pole for middle-sized Mother Bear, and a long, light pole for Little Bear.

Soon they were far from home, but it was afternoon before anything special happened. There was a bend in the river, and when the raft came swishing and tumbling round that bend the Three Bears saw a little log house on a hillside and many children playing outside the door. At that very moment, bump! went the raft into the bank, and there it stuck among the willows!

“Oh, please do not push the raft into the stream for a few minutes!” whispered Little Bear.

“Let us watch the children!”

“Yes, let us watch the children,” added Mother Bear.

So Father Bear, being willing to please his family, seated himself in his huge chair, and Mother Bear seated herself in her middle-sized chair. But Little Bear stood on his tippytoes in his little chair, so that he could see better.

“Oh, I wish those children would let me play with them!” cried Little Bear, as the youngsters joined hands and danced round and round in a circle.

Plainly, the log building was a schoolhouse, for a moment later out stepped the schoolmaster and began to ring a bell.

The children straightway formed in line, boys first, girls behind. Then they all marched into the schoolroom, saying, “Left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot,” and their feet made a merry stamping.

After the children were all in the schoolhouse and the door was closed, a song came floating through the open windows.

When the singing was over, and the only sounds that the bears heard were the song of birds, the lapping of the water, and the humming of bees, Little Bear said to his father and mother, “I see a little path leading from the river to the schoolhouse, and I see bushes beside one of the windows. If I will go softly, softly, and climb softly, softly into the bushes, may I go and peep into the schoolhouse and see the children?”

“Oh, I do not know about that!” began Mother Bear.

But Father Bear said, “Oh, let him go! Only, Son Bear,” he added, “if one of the children should happen to see you, and should say ‘Bear,’ you run straight down to the raft, and we shall be ready to push into the stream and get away!”

So Little Bear crept softly up the path on the hillside, climbed softly into the bushes, and peeped into the schoolroom. All the children were in their seats with their heads bent over books and slates. Then the teacher said sternly, “Primer class! Come forward!”

Two little girls and one little boy, with blue-covered books in their hands, went to a spot in front of the teacher's desk and stood with their toes on a crack in the floor. The little girls edged away from the boy as far as they could while the master looked at them. Little Bear was so much interested that he climbed closer to the window.

“Open your books,” said the schoolmaster.

The three opened their blue-covered books.

“Joan, you may read the lesson first, if you please.”

So Joan read, “I—see—a-cat.”

“Good!” said the master. “Mary, you may read.”

“I-see-a-cat,” read Mary. She knew every word of that lesson.

“Now, Simon,” spoke the master to the boy, “let us hear you read.”

Little Bear was sure that Simon did not know his lesson. He was sure of it because Simon acted so foolish and looked so unhappy. He stood on one foot and then on the other and twisted and squirmed until the girls giggled.

“Come, Simon,” urged the master, “we are waiting.” It happened that Little Bear felt so sorry for Simon that he forgot all about himself, and leaned forward until his paws rested on the window sill. No one noticed him then, because bushes clustered close round that window and he had made no sound.

“Simon,” the master commanded at last, “read the lesson!”

“I-see,” began Simon, “I-see-a-” Then he looked up, but instead of saying “cat,” as the primer said, Simon, with eyes as large and round as saucers, dropped his book and cried, “Bear! I see a bear!”

Sure enough, he did. So did all the children. So did the master, because Little Bear was right up in the window, trying to tell Simon the word “cat”!

Down the hill ran Little Bear as fast as he could go, and scrambled on board the raft. Father Bear and Mother Bear used their poles and quickly pushed the raft into the middle of the

stream, and away went all three of them, laughing. But Little Bear did not wish to visit school again that day-or that summer.

One morning, when the Three Bears were floating downstream on their raft, they saw a farmhouse in the distance.

“Perhaps we shall never be so near a farmhouse again,” said Mother Bear to Father Bear, “so I think we should buy some eggs of the farmer's wife.”

“Do be sensible!” exclaimed Father Bear. “Remember that we have no money and that farmers do not love bears.”

“That does not matter,” said Mother Bear gently. “To-night, when we build our camp fire for the evening, we must have hens' eggs to roast for supper, and how can we have hens' eggs unless we buy them at the farmhouse?”

Father Bear made no answer, but pushed the raft against the bank and tied it to the willows with a rope of wild grapevine. He knew that Mother Bear would have her way, so he wasted no time trying to argue about the matter. “Now, then!” was all Father Bear said after that, as he sat in his huge chair and folded his arms to watch the fun.

“Now, then, 'is what I say, too,” added Mother Bear, laughing. “Honey Cub,” she said to Little Bear, who was wondering what would happen next, “jump off the raft and bring me many long, slim leaves of the cat-tails growing over there, and I will weave two baskets, one for the money, one for the eggs.”

Little Bear hastened to obey. But when he returned with his arms full of cat-tail leaves, he said, “Mother Bear, I have made a wish. Please let us have the eggs for dinner, and let us have them scrambled. Father Bear and I like scrambled eggs better,” and Little Bear winked at Father Bear and Father Bear winked back.

“We shall not make camp at noon so near a farmhouse,” answered Mother Bear, “and the eggs shall be roasted. Now run along after some long grasses, Honey Cub, for me to weave into the baskets with the cat-tails.”

Little Bear obeyed his mother, but he neither danced nor sang as he gathered the grasses.

“Noon is the time for dinner,” he told a big green frog, “and I wish for scrambled eggs at noon.”

“Ker-plunk!” said the frog.

Quickly Mother Bear made two pretty green baskets. “One is for wild strawberries,” she explained. “We will fill it to the brim and leave it for the farmer's wife, instead of money. She will find it in a nest when she goes to gather the eggs.”

“I'll gladly pick the berries,” said Little Bear, “and I'll go with you to find a hen's nest that has eggs in it to scramble.”

“You will stay with your father while I go for the eggs,” answered his mother.

So after Little Bear had filled one green basket with delicious wild strawberries, he stayed with his father while Mother Bear went for the eggs.

“Noon is the time for dinner,” Little Bear said in grumbling tones, “and roasted eggs are not so good as scrambled.”

“Son Bear,” answered Father Bear sternly, “Mother Bear is always right!”

Soon back came Mother Bear, walking fast. And when Little Bear saw the eggs in her green basket, he was so much pleased that he forgot to be cross, although he did not forget his wish. While Father Bear untied the grapevine rope, Little Bear helped Mother Bear to cover the eggs with big green leaves, to keep them cool. He danced and sang as he worked.

“And now we are off for a morning's good fishing!” exclaimed Father Bear, as he pushed the raft into the middle of the stream and passed a wee fish pole to Little Bear, a middle-sized fish pole to Mother Bear, and straightway began fishing himself with his own huge pole and line.

The Three Bears fished all the morning and caught nothing. At noon, without warning, there was a great splashing in the river, and Father Bear exclaimed, "I have a bite!" Well, he pulled, and pulled, and pulled, and could not land his fish. There was great excitement on the raft, until suddenly Father Bear almost caught the fish. Up came the line, up bobbed the fish—a huge fish, almost the biggest fish Father Bear had ever caught. But back fell Father Bear, and bumped into Mother Bear, and she bumped into Little Bear, and he sat down in the basket of eggs, because the three were standing one behind another. Then the fish flopped back, splash! into the water—and the Three Bears were hungry! "Something has happened to the eggs!" exclaimed Little Bear. "I am afraid they are all squashed."

Sure enough! When Mother Bear took the leaves off the basket of eggs, what a sight she beheld! Every shell was broken. Then said Father Bear, laughing: "Roasted eggs are not so good as scrambled, and noon is the time for dinner! Mother Bear, let us go ashore and make camp. We have come a long way from the farmhouse."

"Father Bear is always right," said Mother Bear, as she emptied the broken eggs into the frying pan and began picking out pieces of the shells and tossing them into the water. That is how it came about that the Three Bears built a camp fire at noon and dined on scrambled eggs. They had a jolly time eating dinner in the woods and talking about what a huge fish it was that Father Bear had almost pulled out of the stream in the morning. But after dinner Little Bear laughed and sang:

"I had my wish!
Because Daddy lost his fish!
Ta-de-dum,
Ta-de-dum,
Ta-de-dum-dum-dum!"

until at last the three bears joined hands and danced round the camp fire singing together:

"Little Bear had his wish
When Father Bear lost his fish!
Ta-de-dum,
Ta-de-dum,
Ta-de-dum-dum-dum!"

THREE BEARS COME TO BREAKFAST

From the day when the Three Bears discovered the Enchanted Land where bears may walk without fear of harm, and may safely poke their noses into any man's tent if they choose, from that day, Little Bear teased to go back.

“Then let us be off,” exclaimed Father Bear at last. “Let us be off on a holiday journey, Mother Bear. Come, son, close the door of our little house and away we go!”

And away they went. Little Bear was so happy when the three jolly companions finally reached the Enchanted Land that he went to bed at sunset so that he might be up early in the morning to explore a country where rocks were painted in all colours of the rainbow, where springs of hot water bubbled through the earth, and where crystal-clear waterfalls filled his little heart with wonder.

Sure enough, Little Bear awoke in the early dawn, gave his father a friendly poke in the side, gave his mother's nose a friendly tweak, and thus merrily the day began.

“Let us take a walk before breakfast,” suggested Little Bear.

“Very well,” agreed Father Bear, “and let us catch fish for breakfast in a mountain stream!”

“And we shall cook the fish in the first hot spring along the way,” added Mother Bear.

On through the glorious dawn went the Three Bears, crooning an old song and joyfully sniffing the air, when suddenly they came upon a sleeping camp, where the tents of the campers formed a big circle. In the centre of the circle were the ashes of a campfire, and not far away was a cookstove standing near a covered wagon.

On that stove was a kettle. Over to that kettle pranced Little Bear. He lifted the cover and peeped in.

The kettle was full of something Little Bear had never seen before. Over walked Father Bear, over walked Mother Bear. They peeped in the kettle and shook their heads.

“It is something the cook forgot to put away!” remarked Father Bear in pompous tones.

“You may taste of it if you wish, Son Bear,” said his mother.

Into the kettle went Little Bear's paw, and out it came filled with soft, brown, juicy fruit. He ate it, and it was good-so good he ate more and more. Father Bear ate the fruit, Mother Bear ate the fruit.

“What is it?” they said one to another. But although they could not answer the question, they liked that fruit so well they ate and ate until they ate it all up. They even forgot their manners and smacked their lips.

Suddenly there was a noise in one of the tents, and out popped the cook's wife, calling, “Oh, the bears are eating our prunes! Oh, the bears are eating our prunes! Shoo! Shoo! Shoo! They were eating our prunes!”

“So we were eating prunes!” exclaimed Mother Bear, as away went the Three Bears, laughing.

“And prunes are good!” piped up Little Bear, in his shrill, shrill voice.

But Daddy Bear pranced through the forest singing:

“Oh, let us sing some new, new tunes!

All about her prunes, prunes, prunes!”

And “Prunes, prunes, prunes,” the Three Bears sang all that merry day. “Prunes, prunes, prunes, prunes we had for breakfast!”

Little Bear had never heard of the Pied Piper of Hamelin who rid the town of rats, and then, when he went back for his promised pay, was only laughed at, so that he piped away all the children of Hamelin town and never piped them back again. Mother Bear had never told Little Bear that story. However, she had taught her child to keep his promises, which was

very fortunate, because one day the Pied Piper appeared when Little Bear was alone in the sunbright clearing which was his favourite playground.

It happened that day that Little Bear found his playground full of caterpillars, and he did not like caterpillars. They were everywhere—on the ground, on the grass, on flowers, on the trees, humping along and humping along, eating green leaves.

“Oh, you old humpty-humps,” exclaimed Little Bear, “I wish you would go away!”

But the caterpillars would not go away. They even began crawling over Little Bear. He shook them off and was about to run away when along came that man, tall and thin, with a sharp chin and a mouth where the smiles went out and in, and two blue eyes each like a pin.

And he was dressed half in red and half in yellow, and as we have often been told, he really was the strangest fellow. Around his neck he wore a red and yellow ribbon, and on it was hung something like a flute, and his fingers went straying up and down it as if he wished to be playing.

“I understand that you do not like caterpillars,” said this queer fellow to Little Bear. “Men call me the Pied Piper,” he went on when he saw that Little Bear was too surprised to speak. “And I know a way to draw after me everything that walks or flies or swims! What will you give me if I rid your playground of caterpillars?”

“I shall give you my porridge bowl,” answered Little Bear, “if you can take away these caterpillars.”

Little Bear afterward told his father and mother that he did not believe that the Pied Piper could do it.

Straightway the Pied Piper put the long pipe to his lips and began to play a tune—a strange, high little tune. And before the pipe had uttered three shrill notes the caterpillars humped after the Piper—thin ones, plump ones, skinny ones, woolly ones, striped ones, plain ones, great caterpillars, small caterpillars, lean ones, brawny ones, brown caterpillars, black caterpillars, grey ones, tawny ones, they all followed the Piper for their lives until they came to the edge of the river. Then the Piper suddenly stepped aside and down they tumbled and—were—drowned!

Only one too-plump caterpillar came humping slowly back to the playground, making great lamentation.

“What is the matter with you?” asked Little Bear, who had laughed until he was obliged to wipe away tears with the back of his paw at the sight of so many caterpillars following the Pied Piper.

“Oh me, oh my!” wailed the mournful caterpillar. “He said we should sleep in cradles of silk and wake up with wings of purple! It has been the dream of my life to be a butterfly with wings of gold and purple!”

“Cheer up,” comforted Little Bear, “you just spin yourself a cocoon caterpillar fashion and go to sleep, and you will surely find yourself turned into a butterfly when you wake up! Mother said so! Now there! Why didn't I remember that caterpillars turn into butterflies, before I promised to give away my porridge bowl! I should like to have my playground full of butterflies! I wish I had thought of that! Now those poor old caterpillars are gone and I promised to give away my bowl! Maybe the Pied Piper will not come back!”

But he did. “I should like my bowl!” said he.

“I know that a promise is a promise,” agreed Little Bear promptly and sorrowfully. “You wait here until I run home after it and I shall give you my little bowl!”

And he did. As the Piper took the bowl and turned away, Father and Mother Bear came into the clearing.

“What are you doing with Little Bear's bowl?” they demanded, and would have followed the Pied Piper, but he put the pipe to his lips and began to play a little tune—a soft little tune,

sweet and strange. And the music made Father Bear and Mother Bear stand still as if their feet had been tied to the ground.

“Oh, Little Bear!” they cried in terror. “It is the Pied Piper! Oh, Little Bear, do not follow him!”

“Indeed I could not if I wished to do so,” answered Little Bear, “because my feet will not go! The music has made me stand still too, and I hear voices singing, ‘Stay home with your father! Stay home with your mother! Stay home, Little Bear!’”

As the music grew faint in the distance, the Three Bears were once more able to walk about, and then Little Bear explained that he had promised to give his bowl to the Pied Piper if he would take away the caterpillars, and that he had kept the promise, sad as he felt about losing his treasure.

“Come,” said Mother Bear, “I believe we better go home now before we meet any more strangers!”

When the Three Bears reached home, there was Little Bear’s bowl on the doorstep, and the Pied Piper’s pipe was heard playing softly far away.

After Father Bear told Little Bear the story of Hamelin town he was more glad than ever that he had kept his promise. So was his mother. So was his father.

Little Bear did not like to hear any talk about Sleepy Cave, which was the name of the Three Bears’ winter home, the year Jack Frost came late. There were three beds in Sleepy Cave, ready and waiting for the Three Bears—a big, big bed of boughs and moss for huge Father Bear, a middle-sized bed of fir boughs and moss for middle-sized Mother Bear, and a deep, deep bed of feathery moss for Little Bear.

There were also feathery moss blankets taken from fallen logs in the forest—one for huge Father Bear, one for Mother Bear, and the softest, warmest moss blanket of all for Little Bear. Sleepy Cave was big and warm and dry. There was no chance for snow to drift in the doorway because it was sheltered by a broad overhanging rock, and its back was toward the wind. There was blackberry jam put away in that cave, and combs of honey and other good things to eat in case the family should wake up and feel hungry before spring.

But Little Bear did not like to hear a word about Sleepy Cave. It was the same old story with him, beginning, “I don’t want to sleep all winter! Mrs. Maria Wildcat, she said, “Young cub, you won’t be anything but a Baby Bear, eating porridge out of a little bowl, and sitting in a wee, wee chair, and sleeping in a wee, wee bed, for another hundred years if you lie around and sleep all winter! You’ll never grow up!” She always says that! And Mr. Bob Wildcat, he said—”

“There, there,” Mother Bear interrupted, “don’t let me hear another word about Maria Wildcat or any of the Wildcat family! I think I said this to you once before!”

“But I don’t want to sleep all winter,” wailed Little Bear. “I want to stay in our own little house in the woods and see the snow in the evergreens. I’d love to play in the snow and go sliding on the ice. I want to stay here and eat porridge out of my little bowl and sit in my little chair and sleep in my little bed! Father Deer’s children do not sleep all winter. They make tracks in the snow, and they lie down to rest in the evergreens and watch for their enemies in the middle of the day! Father Deer told me about it all over again! I want to stay here and play all winter like other folks! Sally Beaver’s mother, she said—”

“Hush,” advised Mother Bear, “you have said enough!”

Mother Bear spoke severely, but a moment later when the little fellow went out and sat on the doorstep to think, she said to Father Bear, “Suppose we have a surprise party for Little Bear?”

“A good idea!” agreed Father Bear. “But there is snow in the air, and if there is to be a party it had better be this afternoon. Whom do you wish to invite?”

Mother Bear smiled as she answered, “Let us invite the children of our hibernating friends. I think that will be pleasanter. We’ll invite Auntie Cinnamon’s children, and Uncle Brown

Bear's family, and the Porcupine twins, and the Field Mice children, and the young Muskrats. If you will do the inviting, I will make blackberry jam and honey cakes and get the house in order!"

Little Bear didn't even ask a question as Father Bear started out, looking rather proud of his new fur overcoat.

In the afternoon, as Father Bear and Mother Bear were happily waiting for Little Bear's company, there came a knock at the door, followed by the entrance of Auntie Cinnamon.

"I came to say," said she, "that my children cannot come to the party because they have gone to sleep for the winter. No, I cannot stay, I thank you, but I am glad to stop in a minute to say good night until spring."

"Sleepy heads!" exclaimed Little Bear when Auntie Cinnamon had gone on her way.

Next came Uncle Brown Bear. He was so plump he was out of breath from walking fast and had to rest a minute before he could say, "Our children are all asleep and cannot come to the party, but Auntie Brown sent me over to say we thank you, and good night until spring!" And away he went.

"The sleepy heads!" exclaimed Little Bear again, and how he laughed. "But where is the party, Mother Bear, and am I invited?"

Just then came another knock at the door, and Mother Porcupine walked in to say that the twins were tucked away in bed for the winter and so could not come to Little Bear's surprise party.

Little Bear was so delighted when he learned he was to have a surprise party that he wasn't disappointed when the laughing Blue Jay came with a message from the Field Mouse mother saying that the Field Mice children just couldn't keep their eyes open, they were so sleepy, and so of course they could not come to the party.

"I'll sit by the window and see who does come," said Little Bear, happy as he could be thinking of the party.

Now it happened that no one else had been invited to the party, so Mother Bear took Little Bear to the cupboard to show him the blackberry sandwiches and honey cakes, while Father Bear stepped out to ask the Blue Jay to please fly quickly away and invite the wildcat children and the young squirrels and chipmunks and foxes to come immediately to the party. The Blue Jay flew to do this joyful errand, and soon came dozens of chattering, noisy wildwood children to the party.

But when they reached the house they found Little Bear sound asleep with a contented smile on his face, dreaming of the party! The merry children could not awaken him, although they tried their best because they wished to share with him the blackberry jam and honey cakes.

Late that afternoon when the party was over and the frolicking children had gone, Father Bear took Little Bear in his arms, and Mother Bear closed the house. Then away went the Three Bears to Sleepy Cave.

When Little Bear was snugly tucked in his feathery moss bed, Mother Bear kissed him and said, "I am so glad the little fellow was happy when he went to sleep!"

And that very night it snowed, and snowed—and snowed!

THE END