He sat down on th speaking end.

BITTY AND THE BEARS · ELIZABETH GORELL

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BITTY AND THE BEARS

BY ELIZABETH GORELL

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BITTY AND THE BEARS

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED
IN COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH
THE AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SO EARLY IN THE MORNING

Being the story of Jujunes and Castavairs. *(With illustrations by RUTH JERVIS).*

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(HEINEMANN. 5s. net)

The Bears all stared up at the dear little house.

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By

ELIZABETH GORELL

With Illustrations by

DOROTHY BURROUGHES

★

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

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Reprinted . . . . *December 1942*

To

AN OLD BROWN BEAR

THIS RIDICULOUS BOOK

IS MOST INAPPROPRIATELY

DEDICATED

Made and Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London

PEOPLE IN THIS BOOK

SANDY (the Master of the Bears).

BITTY (three inches high).

ALBERT (the head bear, always very good : you may trust him).

SLEEPIE (a bear with half-shut eyes : he sleeps too much).

LORD RUSHINGTON (a very grand bear, *un petit peu au dessous son gare*, too big for his boots and shows off a bit).

GOLDEN SYRUP (a very greedy bear : his thoughts run always on food).

ORANGE PEKOE (a tiny young bear).

STUBBINS (very anxious to do right, but terribly stupid and slow).

VELVET TROUSERS (a bear who was found).

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ILLUSTRATIONS

THE BEARS DEPART

IT was very early in the morning, but Sandy was awake. He lay watching the nursery curtains sucking in and out in the air which came through his wide open window. The curtains were all covered with flowers, bright bunches of them—anemonies, carnations, poppies, corn-flowers—and they were lined with pink; when they wafted out into the room they let in a golden light from outside, when they drifted back to the window the room looked pink. Sandy grew tired of watching them and turned round to the other side to look at his Bears.

Albert sat on a small wooden arm-chair, his square feet stuck straight out in front, his large paws were on the arms, his big, grave face bent forward a little, his china-blue eyes were fixed on the ground. Albert was trying to be in deep thought, but only one thought would come into his head, Bitty was quite right.'

The other Bears were packed rather untidily into a large wooden box covered with pink cretonne: of Sleepie only a furry foot sticking up could be seen; Lord Rushington peeped out between a mass of arms and legs, even in his sleep he looked as if he thought he was not being given a proper place—he had a proud, discontented frown upon his face. Sandy smiled as he looked at him; then he looked down at the floor close by his bed where stood the Bitty House.

This was a largish box with no lid; it was only covered by a square of muslin. Inside, when this was lifted, could be seen all the little arrangements made for Bitty's comfort

—his match-box-bed with its pretty little bed-cover and the tiny pillow on which his tuft of fair head could be seen, his wee chairs and tables, the bird-bath carefully filled with water ready for the cold bath he never took unless he was forcibly put into it. On a row of tiny hooks on the wall hung his favourite hats, an acorn-cup hat with a brown feather stuck in it, a beech-nut cap flaunting a gay blue jay's feather, and some little caps made with scraps of wool. Bitty kept his possessions in a tiny chest of drawers made of match-boxes piled one above the other, fastened together and painted green ; each little drawer had a bead fastened to it as a handle.

The Bears overslept themselves this morning and Sandy had finished his breakfast and was working at his carpenter's bench when they all trooped into the room. They looked unusually grave and all marched in behind Albert, all staring solemnly at Sandy : they drew up in front of him in a row.

" What d'you want ? " asked Sandy, shouting to make himself heard above the loud sound of his own hammering.

" We wish to tell you what we have decided to do," said Lord Rushington grandly.

" 'Tisn't for you to decide, it's for me," said Sandy, seizing his saw and attacking a small piece of wood.

" Ahem, ahem," said Bitty pertly.

Sandy put out a hand, picked him off Albert's shoulder where he was riding, put him on the edge of his table and turned a tumbler upside down over him. Bitty could be seen scarlet in the face, stamping and dancing up and down with rage, but no sound could be heard.

Sandy sat down on his little stool confronting his Bears.

" Now what is the matter ? What do you want to do ? " he asked, smiling at the solemn row.

" Master," said Albert in his deep, gruff voice, laying his

large paw on Sandy's knee, " Master, Bitty—*we* have decided we ought to earn our own living : we want you to let us all go away for a little and see what we can do to help. We will be very good and I will be in charge."

" You won't ; I shall ! " shouted Lord Rushington. But all the Bears crowded round him and bellowed in his ears, " You won't, you won't ! " till poor Lord Rushington was half deafened.

After listening to a good deal more talk Sandy decided that they should be allowed to try, on condition they promised to return in one month's time, whether they had " earned a living " or not.

They spent the next hour in packing, running to and fro with parcels, and hanging them round Albert's neck, for it had been decided by the others that Albert should carry everything.

Bitty was let out and hurried to collect his special treasures, a little bow Sandy had made him from a willow twig and a thread of silk, two darning needles, and a sharp little crochet hook which he carried on his back in a tiny case like a quiver. The box with his bed and chest of drawers was added to Albert's load and they were ready to start.

They clung round Sandy's neck sobbing, and Sandy too was very upset, too much upset to go downstairs with them, so they said good-bye in the nursery and thumped downstairs alone. But when they got to the front door, their spirits revived, they began to jump about and show off a little as they stood on the doorstep waiting to take their first step out into the world.

They began to sing the Bears' National Anthem and had just got as far as " Bears, Bears, glorious Bears " when the front door slammed on them and shot them all violently out. Stubbins caught one foot round the other and crashed

down on his front in the mud. All the Bears laughed rudely except Albert, who helped him up: poor Stubbins stood, his fur slowly turning red with blushes, his clumsy paws covering his face, the mud trickling down the smart little blue waistcoat he wore and of which he was so very proud.

"Never mind, Stub," said Albert, "think how we are going to help the war by earning money; taxes are so high now."

"Are they?" said Stubbins, cheering up, and turning to the other boys he said eagerly, "The taxes are having a war; they have gone up high. Come on; perhaps we shall see them fighting," and arm-in-arm the Bears started, solemnly at first, but getting more and more joyous as they bumbled along, bumping into each other and laughing in a loud, mad way, singing at the top of their voices,

"Bears, Bears, wonderful Bears,
We are all such darlings, we are all such dears,
We spend all our money
On masses of honey,
We don't care who listens, we don't care who hears,
We are the wonderful, wonderful Bears."

CHAPTER II

JOURNEY'S END

ALL that day they continued their journey. After the first half-hour Albert heard nothing but,

"When shall we have lunch?"

"Where shall we have lunch?"

"What shall we have for lunch?"

Albert paid no attention at all: he answered none of these questions but plodded steadily on.

At last they came to a very large horse-chestnut tree, which spread its branches out all round its great trunk and made a lovely patch of cool, deep shadow. Into this shade Albert led the grumbling Bears: he unloaded all the packets, great and small, which he had carried so long and so patiently on his back and sat down with a tired grunt.

Golden Syrup quickly sat down as close as possible to the package which looked most like food and fixed his eyes expectantly upon it: the other Bears lay flat on their backs and stared up through the branches at the sky. But after about ten minutes they all began to revive; Albert sat up and taking up a clumsily tied parcel (not the one Golden Syrup was waiting for) he opened it and spread out between them on the grass five hard-boiled eggs of ordinary size, a sparrow's egg for Bitty who also had "hundreds and thousands" spread on tiny pieces of bread, some biscuits for them all and a plum each (Bitty had a red current and a black currant).

"What, NO HONEY!" shouted Golden Syrup angrily. "Albert, no honey?"

"You don't think I am going to walk for miles carrying a

lumping great jar of honey, do you ?" said Albert crossly. "Now wake Sleepie up and we will have our food, because we have got to find somewhere to sleep to-night."

Sleepie was shaken awake, a flat stone was provided for Bitty who found the long grass, which was as tall as he, very difficult, and nothing was heard for some time except chumping and smacking of lips.

At last they had finished every crumb: they wiped their mouths with their paws and began to load Albert up again. Bitty was lifted on to his shoulder and off they set once more.

"How can we earn our living when we *are* living already ?" said Stubbins suddenly: this question had been bothering him all the way along, but,

"Don't be stupid, Stubbins dear," answered all the Bears without listening. They nearly always said that when poor Stubbins asked one of his idiotic questions, so he never learnt very much. He took the rebuff humbly and plodded on, turning it over and over in his mind. You earned a penny and you got a penny, you earned a smack and you got a smack, but if you earned a living and were living already, what would happen ? Could you live twice, like having two pennies or two smacks ? Stubbins went on thinking about it so hard that when Lord Rushington who was walking in front of him stopped suddenly Stubbins ran into him hard. Albert had stopped, the whole line of Bears had stopped; they had reached the outskirts of a little village and were in a narrow lane.

Just to their right and a few yards in front this lane widened out into a little square, and at the end of this was a very small building. It was built with two bow windows each side of a little porch—in fact, the whole little house bowed out like some portly little gentleman. It had evidently once been an inn, for, creaking and cracked, an old sign swung by one hinge over the door and the words "The Crown and " could be seen.

Below this hung another sign, a sheet of printed paper—

TO BE LET OR SOLD, THIS INN
APPLY WITHIN.

Lord Rushington read this slowly out: and he called it "*apply*," not "app*ly*."

The Bears all stared up at the dear little house. "What do you suppose '*apply*' means, Lordie ?" asked Albert.

Lord Rushington was far too grand to say he had not the least idea, so he said lightly, "It's short for 'do come in and help yourself and make yourself quite comfortable.'"

On one of the dirty little panes of the window a paper was stuck saying, "Key behind."

Laughing and excited, the Bears passed through a little gate set in a sweet-briar hedge at the side of the house, and flocked round to the back. There was a small orchard and a kitchen garden behind and a green back door; on the door lay a key. Albert picked it up and slowly turned it in the lock. As the door opened, he looked back at the others over his shoulder. "Boys," he said, "we will keep an inn and we will keep a shop here; it is just the place—oh, mind, Stubbins !" he cried out sharply, for Stubbins, seeing a tall green water-butt by the side of the door, had climbed up to investigate and promptly fallen splash in. He was pulled out dripping and shivering and was shaken violently to and fro to get the worst of the water out of his fur, and followed the others into the house and stood dripping in a small room with a brick floor.

"I'm very wet," he said anxiously, looking down at his soaking fur.

"Of course you are," said Albert crossly. You can't plunge in like that and hope to come out dry: wait till we explore a little here and we will make a fire and dry you—or—no, Stubby, you run up and down that path while the sun is still out and when you are dry come in again," and he pushed Stubbins out into the garden again.

"There's absolutely no food except a piece of cheese in a mouse-trap," said Golden Syrup who was poking about into the cupboards.

"Well, bring that along," said Albert. "We can scrape it off and use it on our bread."

"We can't; I've eaten it," said Golden Syrup. "I'm frightfully sorry; I never thought anyone else would like it except a mouse, and we did not bring a mouse."

Albert looked at him sternly. "Just like you," he said reproachfully. "Well, it can't be helped now."

The little inn had one room each side of the front door, and one above each of those, and all four bulged out into round-windowed fronts. There was a little kitchen behind with a flat roof. Albert, looking out at this, thought what a nice place it would make for Bitty, quite big for him, and they could build him a little house of his own out there perhaps, where he could have freedom and independence and they would be free from anxiety about him.

There was very little furniture in the house, but an old wooden table left behind in the kitchen would do for a bed for them all for that night; Lord Rushington and Sleepie went out to collect grass to make it soft. Albert laid out Bitty's tiny box-bed inside the larger box which made his room and put Bitty into it. Bitty skipped about arranging his furniture which had all rolled into a corner on the journey, and, having put it to his liking, he jumped into bed and fell instantly asleep. Grass was piled on to the table and laid

Sandy sat down on his little stool confronting his Bears.

" Ouch ! " shrieked the poor Bear, leaping round. " Ooh, Ooh, Albert. Help ! Albert ! "

in little rolls and hummocks for their pillows, and the tired Bears were soon stretched comfortably in a row.

Suddenly Albert exclaimed, " Good Heavens, poor Stubbins ! " He clambered out of bed and peeped out of the door : the faithful Stubbins was still plodding wearily up and down the garden path.

" Stubby, my poor old Bear, come in," called Albert ; " I thought you were in ages ago." He helped poor exhausted Stubbins up on to the table and gave him the place of honour next to himself, and soon there was nothing to be heard but the terrific snorts and snores of five Bears.

CHAPTER III

IDEAS

WHEN the first rays of sunshine found their way through the dirty window and reached Bitty's bed, he woke up. Sitting in his tiny bed, doubled up with his chin on his knees, he stared before him lost in thought.

All the day before, on the long journey here, Bitty had been content to let the Bears take their own way and "work off their spirits," as he called it to himself; but Bitty, though so tiny, was very much more than the match for any of them in the matter of brains, and he had every intention of taking matters into his own hands at the first possible moment. The Bears had slept so long that Bitty felt that moment had now come; so he bounded out of his little bed, ran through the door of his box room on to the table, slipped down the leg to the floor, and as quickly as any little spider he flashed across to the door and let himself down the one low step on to the garden path.

Bitty's eyes could see as far as those of any person of ordinary size, and when he had marched solemnly down the path for some way he climbed up a rose-tree, using the thorns as a ladder, and took a good look at the house and its surroundings. He was still deep in possible plans when a great commotion started in the house and all the Bears burst out of the door with cries of, "Where is our *darling* little Bitty? Oh! Oh! Oh! Bitty's lost!"

Bitty fitted one of his darning needles to his little bow and let it fly gently. Pop! it went into Lord Rushington's fat back as he stooped over a plant of pansies to see if Bitty could be there.

"Ouch!" shrieked the poor Bear, leaping round. "Ooh, ooh, Albert. Help! Albert!"

Albert ambled hurriedly up and, peering among the thick fur, easily recognized Bitty's weapon, which had a piece of red wool tied to the eye of the needle, "all ready to pull it out with," as Bitty kindly remarked.

Albert pulled it slowly and carefully out while Lord Rushington's angry shrieks rent the air and quite drowned Bitty's peals of wicked laughter as he hid himself under a large pink rose.

Albert stood gravely in the middle of the path, the Bears clustering round him very much interested in the poor victim.

"Bitty, come here," commanded Albert in a loud, clear voice.

Bitty did not move except to put a little thumb up to his tiny nose and spread his fingers in a rude gesture.

Albert moved slowly towards a large flower-pot which stood upside down beside the path; he bent down and put his eye to the hole at the top of the reversed pot. "How lovely!" he said, gazing in.

"What? What? Let us see!" cried the Bears, pressing and pushing round him, but Albert kept them off with his elbows and continued to gaze fixedly in.

"Not now," he said firmly when he was erect once more. "After breakfast if you are good you shall take it in turn to look in; now let's go into the house," and away they went very slowly.

They had hardly gone two yards before Bitty nipped down his thorn ladder and, all his curiosity aroused, alighted on the pot and stared down the hole: finding it was too dark to see, he swung his feet through and dropped lightly down inside. This was just what the cunning Albert was

waiting for; swinging round, he returned quietly to the pot and placed a brick on the top of the hole.

"Caught, Master Curiosity," he said quietly.

The Bears joined hands and danced round the flower-pot chanting,

"Bears, Bears, *wonderful* Bears!
Oh, what a pity
For poor little Bitty:
We don't care who listens, we don't care who hears!"

Bitty lost his temper badly inside the flower-pot; though he "took in" the Bears quite often, he was very rarely trapped himself; he danced and screamed and even lay down on the ground and hammered with his heels so fast that, like a propeller going round, they could scarcely be seen to move. The Bears all waited and listened a short way off, their paws pressed to their mouths to prevent their smothered bursts of laughter from being heard by Bitty. As soon as his angry cries ceased, they marched back again and Albert asked him if he would like to come out and be good.

"Not a bit," said Bitty carelessly: "don't you bother about me."

"We are going to start a shop," said Albert ingratiatingly.

"With *refreshments*," put in Golden Syrup, licking his lips.

"All right; go ahead," said Bitty very carelessly; "what are you going to sell?"

There was a dead pause; the poor Bears had no ideas: they really had very few ideas at any time unless they were near food, and then they had only one idea.

In the long silence that followed Bitty could be heard humming to himself inside; they could not see his grin.

Albert attempted to lift the pot off him, but his arms were not long enough to go round.

"Bitty, I am sure you are good now; you really may come out," he said.

"I'll allow you to," added Lord Rushington grandly.

"I'm not at all sure I am," answered Bitty lightly; "we had better not risk it." Bitty's pride was touched and he meant the Bears to eat a little humble pie before he would consider being forgiven. "In fact, I am pretty sure I am not. How's your tail, Lordie?" and he laughed wickedly.

"Albert, *make* him stop!" cried Lord Rushington passionately, but Bitty only laughed louder.

"Now, now, now," began Albert rather vaguely, because he really did not know what to do. "Bitty, we can't waste more time; we must set to work."

"All right," said Bitty; "you begin."

The Bears looked at each other; they had not the slightest idea how to.

"We have got to get our refreshments ready to sell," shouted Golden Syrup.

"How?" Bitty shouted back.

There was another pause; then the Bears signed to each other by shrugs that they must give in.

"Bitty," called Albert, "you win; we ask you to come out."

"On your bended knees?" called Bitty, highly delighted.

"On our bended knees," chanted the disgusted Bears, plumping down on to their fat knees round the pot.

"Good. Get me out then," said the wicked Bitty.

Albert broke off a trail of wild rose and poked it through the hole. Bitty came climbing up, and took off his hat. "Good. Boys, you can get up," and he jumped into Albert's arms.

"You wretched little nuisance," said Albert, hugging him carefully, "I wonder I don't put my foot on you and crush you flat. Now we must confab together."

They all sat down in a row on the doorstep and the Bears tried to look intelligent.

"Now, first of all," began Bitty, "this house must be cleaned and all the windows made bright. The window on one side of the door shall be stocked with things to sell and the other with refreshments. Now, don't tell me we haven't got anything to sell and no refreshments—this is where we use our brains. We must invent, beg, borrow, or steal. Borrowing and stealing is practically the same thing, so we will call it borrowing; it is a much prettier word."

Here Stubbins began saying to himself in a gentle, slow voice, "Borrow, Bor-row," and then in a fierce, short one, "Steal, Steal," till he had convinced himself that Bitty was right.

"I have Ideas," went on Bitty, "about a small stock for the shop, and also how to start off our refreshments, which, of course, won't be so good at the beginning as they will when we are making money; but I have Ideas about that too. Now I think we should divide up. I suggest Stubbins and Goldie should start cleaning. Sleepie and Albert, if you go into that shed at the bottom of the garden you will find a whole lot of old jam-jars; roll them all up here and wash them well, and if you have done before I get back, do you think, Albert, you could possibly make a cage?"

"What sort of a cage?" asked Albert slowly.

"A cage for Bears," said Bitty. "It needn't be very strong. We are going to sell Bears."

"*WHAT?*" shouted every Bear in chorus.

"We are going to sell Bears," repeated Bitty lightly. "Don't be alarmed; I told you it wouldn't be a strong cage

—just you leave everything to me. Now, Lordie, you take Albert's biggest hankie and come along with me. Thank you, yes, I'll ride on your shoulder. Get on with your jobs, Bears, and work hard; we won't be very long. I expect it will take us about two days to get quite ready. If you have finished before we get back, see if there is anything to eat in the orchard there next door."

"There isn't," said Golden Syrup simply, "now."

"Well," said Bitty, scowling at him, "I must see what Ideas I have. Good-bye, Boys; work hard and well. Come along, Lord Rushington," and the two of them marched off together.

CHAPTER IV

THE BEAR'S HEAD

AS soon as Bitty and Lord Rushington were out of sight, Albert, Stubbins, Golden Syrup and Sleepie set to work very hard. Searching in an out-house, they came across a large piece of wood and also some pots of paint. With his tongue hanging out, Albert, in the middle of his anxious friends who pressed round him pouring out advice, carefully painted a bright, crude picture of a bear's head wearing a crown.

"When the others come back," he said, "they can write the name on the other side of the board and we will hang it up. Now then, Stubbins and Goldie will clean the windows. Wake up, Sleepie, you and I will start upstairs and get a bedroom ready."

Stubbins and Golden Syrup went up to one of the bow windows and stared rather disconsolately at the dirty glass.

"What on earth can we clean it with?" asked Golden Syrup in a grumbling tone.

"Oh, spit!" said Stubbins cheerfully.

Very much heartened by this suggestion, and delighted at the chance to spit unreproved, the two Bears took up their positions, Golden Syrup outside and Stubbins inside. As soon as Stubbins gave the signal each of them spat hard at the other, the glass, of course, being between. They went on spitting and laughing and laughing and spitting for quite a time, and then briskly rubbed the window-panes with their paws. They got all the worst of the grime off and they finished up by polishing the glass by rubbing every bit of themselves and each other against the glass till it was all

"May I bathe too?" asked the puzzled Sleepie timidly.

" We don't sell eggs by the pound, sir," said the little shopkeeper humbly.

bright and clean. By this time *they* certainly were not.

A pail with some water and a rag had been put, by Albert, near the window. He had meant this to be used for washing the window, but neither of the Bears had noticed it till Stubbins, stepping backwards to admire his handiwork, kicked against it, staggered wildly for a few seconds and sat down hard on the floor in the middle of a spreading pool of water.

" Gosh ! " he exclaimed slowly.

Golden Syrup, delighted to see the mess, rushed into the pool and began spreading it about with his feet till he accidentally stepped on the soap and joined Stubbins in the pool with more haste than dignity. The two Bears, looking at each other, began to laugh in a loud, hysterical way which brought Albert hastily downstairs ; he too trod upon the soap which had skidded across the room and come to rest just in the doorway. Albert slithered violently and at last crashed into the pool. Little Sleepie, who had followed Albert downstairs, came to the door and looked in. Albert and Stubbins lay flat on their backs, Golden Syrup was trying to get up, but his legs always slipped from under him and he fell on his fat front with his face in the water ; all three were laughing in a loud, frantic way, Golden Syrup was bubbling whenever he fell on his face.

" May I bathe too ? " asked the puzzled Sleepie timidly.

" We aren't—we aren't, ha ha ! ha ha ! " shrieked Albert —Albert very rarely laughed, but when he did he went quite mad. " We're cleaning—we're cleaning——" Albert began again.

Sleepie tiptoed forward. " May I clean too ? " he asked. " It looks rather fun."

" It's quite hard work, though," panted Albert, who was

coming to his senses and hoped to rescue some of his dignity. "You have to push yourself up and down the floor on your back in the soap, so as to get it all quite clean."

"Your back?" asked Stubbins, sitting slowly up.

"No, stupid, the floor." Albert gave himself an airy push across the floor, seated. 'If I can make them think this is how it is done, it will look better,' he thought, 'and as I am sopping already——' But "Ouch!" he shrieked as he slid over a sharp splinter which ran itself into him. He sprang to his feet, slipped and sat down again with a sharp howl. Stubbins, anxiously watching him, sprang up and sat down again in exact imitation.

"Is that right, Albert?" he asked happily. "What do we do next?"

Albert rose slowly to his knees. "Stubbins," he said heavily, "I've got something sticking in my fur; will you pull it out?"

Stubbins slithered obediently forward and, taking hold of a piece of Albert's fur, he pulled it out. "It seems almost a pity," he said sadly, looking at the golden tuft in his paws: "don't let's pull out any more."

Albert, too enraged to answer, waddled painfully across to Sleepie. "Pull out the SPLINTER in my fur!" he shouted.

The astonished Sleepie woke from a doze and fumbled about blindly in Albert's thick fur.

"I can't find it, Albert," he whimpered.

Golden Syrup now came to join the hunt. Albert, all dignity gone, lay in the soapy water. Golden Syrup hunted about like a monkey in his fur for some time, then, "What am I supposed to be looking for?" he asked anxiously.

"A splinter, stupid!" shouted the exasperated Albert.

Stubbins, thinking he was being addressed, bent forward

and peered closely. "There's a nasty, sharp piece of wood sticking right into you, Albert. Do you want that in, or shall we pull it out? And then perhaps we can find a splinter. (Stubbins had no idea what a splinter was.)

"Ouch!" shrieked Albert again as the combined efforts of his friends dragged this out.

"Anyhow, you don't want *that* old thing in your nice fur," chattered Stubbins happily. "Now, what shall we pull next?"

Albert lay silent, recovering himself. "Never mind, boys, you did your best," he said, getting rather heavily to his feet, "and the floor is clean and you certainly made a good job of the windows. Let us all go out into the sun and get dry till Bitty comes back." And the four Bears, lolling against the doorstep in the hot sun, exhausted by their toil, were soon all fast asleep.

And so, when Bitty and Lord Rushington, laden with a sack, returned shortly afterwards, they found a set of dirty-looking Bears sleeping exhaustedly, and the sign-board with the bear's head painted on one side of it lying against the post on to which it should hang. Bitty looked at it for a few minutes, then, with a secret and rather wicked smile, he dipped the paint-brush in red paint and wrote the word "BITTY" in fairly small letters, and underneath, in letters so big that he had to walk over the board dragging the paint-brush behind him, he wrote the words, "THE BEAR'S HEAD," "for that is just what I am," he said to himself happily as he snuggled down against Albert to enjoy, too, a well-earned nap.

CHAPTER V

STOCKING A SHOP

WHEN Bitty and Lord Rushington left the Bears to clean house, they had made their way to the small shop which Bitty's sharp eyes had noticed on their long trek the day before. It was not far off, but Bitty had ridden there on Lord Rushington's shoulders and on the way he poured his instructions into his ears. Lord Rushington, who hated to be told what to do, though he was not a bear of much resource, kept on saying rather crossly, " All right, I know that," or " that is just what I was going to do, anyhow," or " you needn't keep telling me, I know quite well what to do," when really he had not the least idea and was listening with all his might.

They soon reached the little shop, and Lord Rushington spread his sack open just below the step which led into it, as Bitty had directed him and then stalked grandly in and, swarming up on to the chair before the counter, he began to " make conversation " and " spin out the time," as Bitty had told him. First he asked the price of currants a pound. When he was told, he asked how many currants went to a pound : the flustered little shopkeeper began to count them and got very muddled up, and this took a long time ; then, when he was beginning to count them for the fourth time, Lord Rushington said it didn't matter very much how many there were and as he said currants he had meant eggs, and as he did not need any eggs they need not be counted now, " though you *should* know," he said very severely.

" We don't sell eggs by the pound, sir," said the little shopkeeper humbly.

" That's only an excuse because you don't know," said Lord Rushington grandly.

Finally he bought a bottle of ginger ale and some humbugs with a nice red line running round them.

Bitty, meanwhile, had entered the shop quite unnoticed and was stealing about the floor among a number of sacks. They had brought with them, at his request, a long, narrow piece of cardboard, bent in the middle all along its length. Bitty drew his darning-needle from its little sheath and made a tiny hole in one of the sacks. It was full of walnuts. 'Too large and too noisy,' thought Bitty, and he pierced the next one. A tiny stream of white sugar came out.

Bitty, highly delighted, made the hole a little larger, pushed one end of his cardboard funnel inside and laid the other end carefully over the doorstep against which the sack Lord Rushington had carried was laid open, and at once a lovely soft, white stream of sugar ran along the cardboard and into the sack. When he thought he had enough sugar, Bitty dug a little hole in a sack of currants and sent them streaming into the sack, all among the sugar too. A gay little stream of small filbert nuts followed and Bitty, growing bolder, speared two or three prunes from a box, and a date or two. He even rolled a jar of honey very softly across the floor and let it drop noiselessly over the step and into the sack now padded out with sugar, and just as he finished this Lord Rushington climbed down from the chair with his purchases, popped them into the sack and threw it over his shoulder quickly, so that the shopman had no time to see that there was anything else in it and, with Bitty clinging to his shoulder fur, he stepped out on their return journey.

" That's not what you call *stealing*, Rushie," he said, after they had gone some way, and his voice sounded a little anxious.

"Of *course* not," said Lord Rushington stoutly.

"What is it called then?" asked Bitty in a very small voice, after a long silence during which he had been thinking very hard.

"Oh," said Lord Rushington, equally puzzled, "oh——" Then in a very loud and grand voice to give himself confidence, he said, "It's called stocking a shop."

Bitty was delighted. Yes, of course, how silly he had been: of *course* it was stocking a shop. "I'd quite forgotten its proper name," he said, beginning to be important again. "Now I remember what it is called, and of *course* all shops have to be stocked before they can get any money. They always pay *next* time, don't they? Wasn't I clever? Didn't we do it well?" And Bitty jogged up and down on Lord Rushington's shoulder. "We had better go back and show the shopman how well we have done it." In some ways Bitty did not understand much more than the Bears.

Back they marched to the little shop and spread open the sack on the floor. "Please look at our stocks and see if we have done it right," Bitty asked the little shopkeeper anxiously.

The astonished man came out from behind his counter and inspected the small collection. He looked at Lord Rushington and a broad smile spread over his face: he bent down to gaze at Bitty and burst out laughing.

"How much shall we owe when we can pay?" asked Bitty haughtily.

"Owe? Why, nothing, little master. I'll be proud to serve a gentleman your size any time you come along. Well, well, I'm blessed! To think of that now, the clever little creature!" The kind little man actually poured a little brown sugar in among the white sugar and added a good handful of raisins.

"There," he said, still laughing. "Away with you, and when you want more stocks, I am your man."

Lord Rushington rolled the sack together with dignity and picked up Bitty. "Good morning to you," he said haughtily, for he did not much care for being laughed at, and strode out of the shop and down the road, Bitty still bouncing happily on his shoulder.

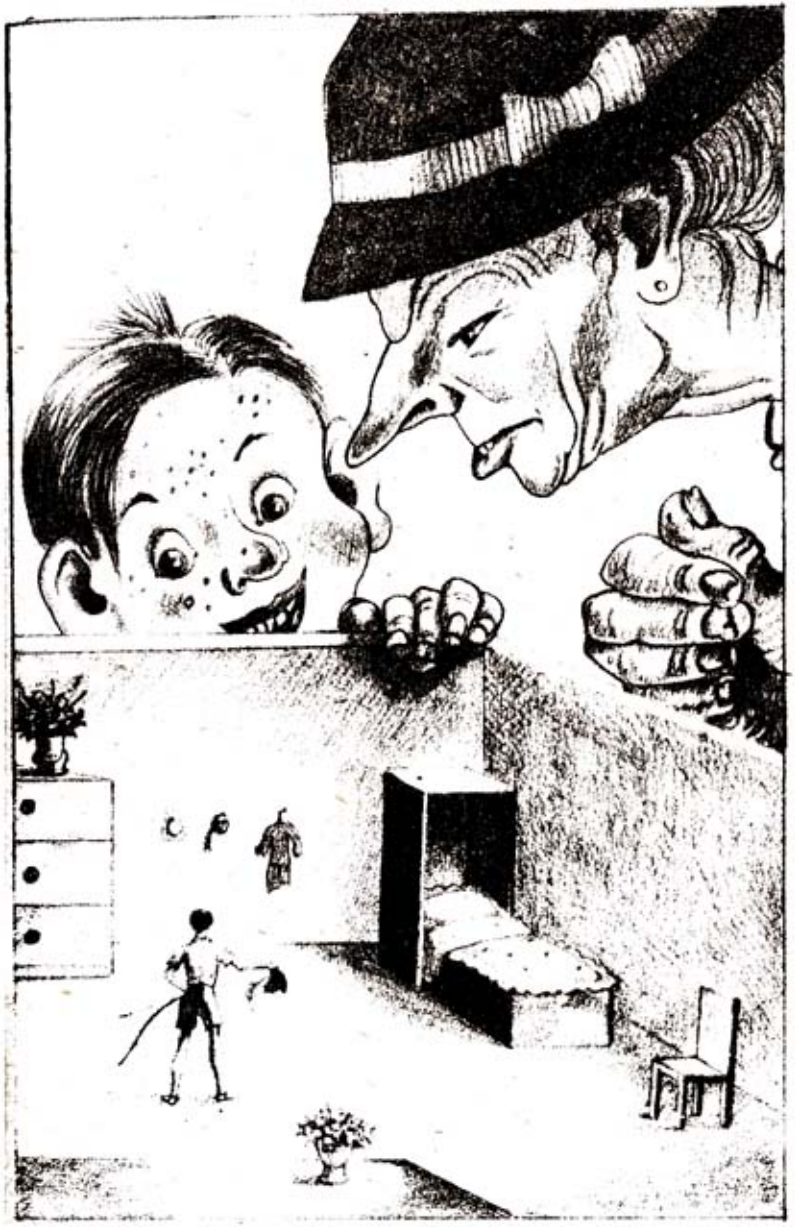
"You see, I was right," he said. "What it has got to do with stockings I don't know, but it *is* called stocking a shop."

CHAPTER VI

A BEAR IS SOLD

THE " Bear's Head " was at last ready. If you went in at the door and into the little room on your left, you would find yourself in " the proper little pub and shop " as the Bears called it.

They had worked long and hard to get everything quickly ready. The proper little pub and shop was very simply stocked. The Bears had found the village rubbish-dump, and this had provided many treasures. Several dozen bottles had been brought home and washed clean and bright. On the very front of the wooden table, which made their " counter," stood the bottle of ginger-ale Lord Rushington had bought, and beside it lay a bundle of neatly cut straws from a near-by field. All the bottles which looked like this bottle were stacked together near by. They had been filled with water. In Sandy's room Bitty had often seen chestnut boughs standing in glass jars and had noticed how golden-brown the water soon became. So a chestnut stick had been put into the mouth of each bottle till the water inside just matched the real ginger-ale. There was also a pile of little, square bread-pills, which had been damped and rolled in the sugar from the sack, and these looked very like Turkish delight. The currants, too, which the reluctant Sleepie had been forced to separate from the sugar, made quite a good appearance ; the nuts were there as well, and a few bunches of wild flowers in jam-jars. The main body of the sugar, the dates, prunes, and honey had been put aside for the Bears' own use, at the suggestion of Golden Syrup, " for it would never do if we all looked



Bitty had to bear two ugly faces staring closely in at him.

Stubbins was sold.

very thin and as if we did not sell good enough things to keep ourselves nice and fat, would it ?" he said. "Because then no one would come and buy."

"There's something in what you say, Goldie," said Albert, but he removed the store from behind the counter close to Golden Syrup, took it away upstairs and hid it. Golden Syrup looked after him with disappointed eyes, licking his lips a little.

On another table near the window their two great attractions were arranged. One was Bitty's little room, which was very clean and tidy. On the table in the middle of it, in a doll's cup, was arranged a tiny bouquet of eye-bright and tormentils ; his little chairs, his bed, his wee coats and hats were out for inspection. A cover was to be thrown over the whole thing when any customer appeared and a penny was to be asked from everyone who wanted to see him.

The other special attraction was the sale of Bears. Several very simple small cages had been made ; they were just a square of wood for the floor, another for the ceiling, and these had bars made of straight twigs all cut the same length exactly and fitted into holes in the ceiling and holes in the floor—there was a door on one side with quite a difficult fastening. Now Bitty had carefully cut through some of the bars in the side of the cage opposite the door and fitted them together again so that the join could scarcely be seen.

It was decided that Stubbins should be the first Bear to be "sold." Stubbins, not understanding at all what it was all about, sat watching with large tears rolling slowly down his face ; he was most anxious to do all he could to help about those mysterious taxis which were so high, but he had never seen any of them, and he could not understand why he had to be sent away and sold to bring them down again.

"Couldn't we *shoot* them down instead?" he asked Albert timidly, watching the fastening of the door of his cage being tried.

"Don't be silly, Stubby dear," answered Albert automatically, not listening at all.

At this moment Lord Rushington, who was at the door looking down the road, came rushing breathlessly in, exclaiming that a customer was on her way. Immediately all was wild confusion. Golden Syrup and Lord Rushington dived behind the counter, Bitty scuttled into his room, Albert popped Stubbins out of sight behind the table of cages and took up his place as the shop-walker near the door, and Sleepie, whose orders were to spread the cover over Bitty's room, woke suddenly and threw the cover hastily over Albert. Albert, struggling in its folds, had just time to free himself, cover Bitty's room and again stand, paws on hips, at the door when the customer came in. All the Bears were breathing fast and heavily.

She was not a nice-looking woman. Her face was red, and her nose was long and sharp; her mouth looked hard and cruel. At her side was a disagreeable, fat little boy of about seven. After staring silently round, taking no notice at all of Albert's polite, "Good morning, Madam, what can I do for you?" she stalked up to the counter and stared at the little stock of goods laid out with such care. "Hem," she remarked; "not very much *here* anyone will want."

The little boy began in a whining, sing-song voice: "I wa-a-nt some ginger-ale, Mumma, I *wa-a-nt* some ginger-ale."

"We can get much better drinks in the town, Paul," said his mother. "This looks very nasty indeed."

"But I want *this* ginger-ale; I don't wa-a-nt to go to the town," whined the little boy.

"Would you care to taste it, sir?" asked Lord Rushington, putting a straw in the bottle. Paul eagerly took the other end into his mouth and sucked so hard that Lord Rushington quickly drew the bottle back and Paul hiccoughed violently. "It's *good*, Mumma," he said, "buy it for me."

"How much is it?" asked his mother disagreeably. "Sixpence? Well, you must give me a new bottle; I won't take that sucked one."

"Certainly, Modom," said Lord Rushington smoothly. "That is our sample bottle only," and he placed a bottle of the chestnut water carefully in her basket.

"Perhaps the nice young gentleman would care to see our fairy boy?" Albert came forward with this suggestion. "A penny a peep—*each*," he added firmly as they both stepped forward together.

"Or if you want a reducement and be very cheap, threepence for the two," put in Golden Syrup.

"Certainly I'll have the cheap one; it's probably worth nothing at all," said the disagreeable lady, producing threepence which Golden Syrup hastily put into his tin with a loud ringing sound and a wink at Lord Rushington.

Sleepie unveiled Bitty's room, nearly pulling the whole thing over in his eagerness, and Bitty had to bear two ugly faces staring closely in at him. He sat on his tiny chair, sharpening his needle, and longing to poke it into these horrid people. But business was business, and he only got up, walked about, put on his hat, took it off, and was beginning quite to enjoy showing off as a duty when Albert re-covered him, thinking they had had their money's worth. Bitty had the great satisfaction of hearing another threepence go loudly into the tin, "For another stare at the funny little fairy boy."

The Bears were all beaming now, and Albert almost forgot to sell a Bear till Paul, who had been slowly reading the notice pinned to the table-cloth on which the row of empty cages lay, spelt out: "Buy a Bear—Mumma, I *wa-a-nt* a Bear."

Mumma argued with him a little, but at last said to Albert, "Well, show me your wretched Bear; if it's very cheap, we may buy it; we can always make soup for the dogs with it when we have done with it."

The horrified Albert, determined to ask such a big price that the beloved Stubbins should take not the slightest risk with this dreadful woman, dived behind the table-cloth and, taking the miserable Stubbins round his fat waist with both hands, he sat him on the table in front of them, but did not leave go.

"I don't care for that one at all," said the woman rudely. "An ugly, miserable-looking bear; show me another."

'I'd make you ugly and miserable-looking, you horrid toad,' thought Bitty, peering through a tiny hole in his cover.

Albert lifted Stubbins down, smoothed down his fur, whispered, "It's all right, Stub," and lifted him up again on to the table.

"Ah, *that's* a much nicer bear," exclaimed the woman. "Now, that's something like a bear; nice and fat too."

"Don't touch him; he bites," put in Albert quickly to save Stubbins from being poked by her long, bony finger.

"Bites, does he? Ho-ho, we'll soon cure him of that, won't we, Paul?" was the vicious answer.

"Yes, Mumma, yes, we'll cure him all right, we'll——"

"*Hush*, Paul, wait till we get home," put in his mother very quickly. "How much?" she said, turning to Albert.

"Er—er—a pound—I mean, two pounds; two pounds, ten shillings," said Albert firmly, preparing to put Stubbins back.

"I'll take him," said the woman grimly. There was a horrified pause and all the Bears began to breathe hard again.

Albert was caught. Desperately he whispered his last instructions, so often already repeated to Stubbins.

"Wait till you have gone as far as the end of that road, just where the little wood begins; then break open those bars Bitty arranged, climb out, hang on by the good bars while you fix the others together again so that the joint doesn't show, drop down and hide anywhere, or run up a tree and keep hidden till they have gone quite away. You'll be back here very soon; cheer up, Stub."

Stubbins was carefully put in through the door of the cage; the cage was jerked away by the nasty woman who marched off down the road, her boy hopping beside her. All the Bears stood on the doorstep staring anxiously at the piteous, little, drooping figure of Stubbins till they could see no longer. Stubbins was sold.

CHAPTER VII

STUBBINS OBEYS ORDERS

AWAY down the road marched the Bears' first customer; with her left hand she held Paul's, from her right dangled and swung the unhappy Stubbins whose fur in front was quite damp with the tears he could not repress.

"What fun to have a real live sort of Teddy Bear, Mumma," he heard Paul say as he tramped beside his mother. "*Won't* the other boys be jealous!"

"We can make a lot of money on this bear, Paul," answered his mother. "And when we've done with him he will make a fine soup. *Bite*, will he?" she added spitefully. "We'll teach him to bite, Paul, won't we?" And she laughed: a very nasty sound it was.

Stubbins grew quite cold to hear it and he began to pull himself together. They had now reached the tall trees of the little wood of which Albert had spoken. Stubbins looked wistfully up at the tree-tops; he had not taken in Albert's careful instructions at all; he had been far too frightened and upset. The tree-tops were high, he thought, looking up at them; perhaps the taxes might be up there. How wonderful if he could catch one, or coax one to come down somehow; then he would have done something to help, and need not be sold at all.

Stubbins had helped to make the cages for Bears; he knew just how the door fastening worked. He put his paw through the bars, opened the door quite simply, dropped to the ground and began to climb the nearest trunk. The woman felt the kick the cage gave as Stubbins

sprang down, looked at it, saw the door was open, saw the stout little figure of Stubbins about a yard up the trunk of a near-by tree, dropped all she had in her hands, and ran shouting towards him. Stubbins went up the tree like a flash and did not stop till he had reached the very top, where he divided his time between staring anxiously down through the branches to see if those horrible people in the road could climb, and upwards into the blue sky, in case a high tax might be passing within hail.

The Bears had sold quite a lot of things to other customers and were loitering about in their little shop, hoping each moment to see Stubbins coming back to them, when the door flew open and in rushed Paul and his mother, purple with rage. It was some time before they could clearly understand what they were saying in such furious voices. "Badly made cage."—"The door fastening utterly unsafe."—"They would have the Bear or their money back."

At this Albert moved towards their tin of money, saying in a dignified voice, "Of course, if I failed to fasten the door properly you shall have your money back," when the angry woman exclaimed, "You shall try to get me that Bear first. I could make a pretty penny with a bear like that: you come along with me and try to catch him—if you can't, it will be time enough to talk of what you will owe me; you come along with me. Come along, Paul."

Paul, who had jerked off Bitty's cover and was having a spiteful stare for nothing into Bitty's little room, turned away reluctantly. Bitty, who had dived under his bedclothes so as not to be stared at for nothing, crept quickly out and hid on Albert's shoulder, and they all went away down the road together. On reaching the tree, Albert looked up and saw Stubbins gazing anxiously down at him from a great height.

"You ought to be able to climb; go up and fetch him down," ordered the angry customer, opening the cage-door wide.

Albert slowly approached the tree.

"Stubbins," he called out, "Stubbins, come down; this woman has bought you and she is going to make you into soup." 'That ought to prevent him obeying,' thought Albert, but to his horror he saw Stubbins descending till he stood before Albert, his eyes fixed trustfully on him. "You're going to be made into *soup*, Stubbie," cried Albert despairingly, but though Stubbins's mouth drooped sadly and his eyes grew rounder and more anxious, he stepped obediently into the cage and the door was shut and even tied up with string by his captor. "Good-bye, Stubbins," said the helpless Albert, "and don't forget all we told you," he added very emphatically indeed.

"What did you tell him?" asked Paul suspiciously.

"Oh, I just told him to be sure and remember there was a war on," said Albert hastily, and stood by the roadside while Stubbins's cage was hung by string on to Paul's back, and away they went with the sad face of Stubbins peering at him through the bars.

Stubbins was busy racking what brains he had; he felt the time had come to be very cool and clever. Albert had told him to remember there was a war on. What *was* a waron? Stubbins wondered. Anything to do with being made into soup? 'A waron, a waron,' said he to himself several times, looking about and repeating to himself the names of all he set his eyes on, hoping something would prove to be a waron. He looked at his cage-door. What it was fastened with was called string, he thought, or twine, or rope; he had never heard it called waron as far as he could remember. He sat down on the floor of his cage

with a heavy sigh; well—all he could do now was to obey Albert exactly and remember that there *was* a waron, somewhere.

Now, Bitty had been thoroughly uneasy about the sale of Stubbins. Though he sometimes teased him, the good little Bear was a great favourite of his, and so it was that when Stubbins was put into the cage and carried off for the second time, Bitty hid himself in Paul's pocket and, all unknown to Stubbins, was making the journey too. He allowed the two humans to walk for about half a mile, and then he crept out and ran lightly up the thick stuff of Paul's coat and on to Stubbins's cage. He peeped through the bars with his finger on his lips. Stubbins, seeing him suddenly, gave a convulsive start. "Keep still, you nasty little beast, or I will skin you," shouted Paul. Bitty ducked under the cage and waited a moment, then stole out again to find Stubbins staring anxiously about. Bitty softly took hold in turns of each of the bars of the cage which had been broken and fixed together and broke them quickly and quietly apart till there was room for Stubbins to squeeze through.

Bitty climbed up to his ear and whispered, "Drop to the ground, Stub, and run through that gate into the long grass; don't let them catch you, and *never* let anyone, even Albert, put you into a cage again."

Stubbins dropped softly into the dusty road and ran quickly into the grass. Bitty fixed the bars carefully and exactly into position again and prepared to follow him, and the horrid pair of humans might have reached home before they realized they had lost their Bear, only that Bitty, as he prepared to jump down, could not resist the temptation of plunging his darning-needle into Paul's fat leg. Such a shriek burst from him, and, turning to see what had hurt him, the empty cage was discovered.

"Run, Stubbins!" panted Bitty, rushing into the grass and catching hold of Stubbins's fur. "Cut across this field; run for your life! They can't see us, but we *must* get back before they do."

Reaching the "Bear's Head" breathless and exhausted, Stubbins laughing and crying hysterically, Bitty climbed Albert and began pouring instructions into his ear. Albert needed no second telling; he turned quickly to Stubbins, seized that astonished little Bear, rushed with him to the water-barrel, plunged him in, shook him violently till the drops flew off him in all directions, stood him, all dripping, on the floor behind the counter, poured over his head the bag of white sugar and sat him, all white and sparkling, on a high shelf which ran round the room.

"Don't you *budge*, Stubbins," he said in an awful voice. "Whatever happens or whatever is said, don't you budge unless Bitty tells you to." Stubbins was so utterly bewildered that he sat like a little image, his arms and legs sticking stiffly out in front, unmoving.

Suddenly the door opened and in burst Paul and his mother, more red-faced and furious than before. "Scandal, disgrace, cheats, robbers!" they shouted.

"Have you lost your Bear again, Modom?" asked Albert in a very cold, icy voice. "Very peculiar. May I see your cage? You fastened the door up yourself, I remember. Ah, I see it is still firmly fastened, *and* tied. This, Modom, is called trying to get money under false expenses."

"Disgusterating," said Lord Rushington grandly.

"But I tell you, I tell you——" shouted the woman.

"Modom, *I* am telling you now," interrupted Albert very haughtily. "This is a case for the police, I think. Did you try it on twice? First did you open the door and

let the Bear out and try to get your money back? now, are you stupid enough to fasten and tie up the door *after* you have let it out and to pretend a bear could do that by itself? And again you want your money back, I suppose? *Very* peculiar."

Rather cowed by the mention of the police, the woman looked about uneasily: she was very doubtful what they would say to her plan of making a pet bear into soup.

"I will take that white bear on that shelf instead, though it is evidently not alive but only a toy," she said more calmly, pointing to where the white and sparkling Stubbins sat, erect, silent and stiff.

"You will take nothing whatever," said Albert, "except perhaps a walk to the police station. Syrup, kindly ring the police."

Syrup ran into the next room, leaving the door open, and began a loud conversation on an imaginary telephone.

"Put me on to the police, please," he called, "and be quick about it; we have a criminal here."

"If you can't get on to them, ring the S.C.R.R.R." called out Lord Rushington. "They are the best people to deal with this sort of case." (He had no idea what these initials could mean, but nor had anyone else.) Thoroughly alarmed by this, the woman took out her purse and pressed three pounds into Albert's paw.

"Please take this; it must have been some mistake. I see now the door is shut; I don't know what could have happened. Please don't ring the police. Yes, you can keep the cage. Come, Paul, come quickly." Albert handed the money back. "Certainly not, Modom: we won't take any money from you at all. Here is what you gave before,

and now go as fast as possible." The two of them darted quickly from the shop and fairly ran down the road.

The Bears joined hands and danced round and round in a wild circle, laughing loudly and kicking their legs about. Bitty, from the counter, watched them silently with a twinkle in his eye.

"How clever, *clever* we are," the Bears shouted. "Bears, Bears, glorious Bears, glorious, glorious, *glorious* Bears! We've made five pounds, ten shillings and sixpence on poor old Stubbins, *and* got him back, *and* we gave it back too, everyone is happy!—Oh, marvellous, marvellous, *marvellous* Bears!" (Where money is concerned, Bears are very ignorant.)

"Come on down, Stub; all safe now," called Albert.

Stubbins sat like an image and did not move an eyelash. He remembered Albert's last injunction and was determined to make no mistake.

"Stubbins!" shouted the Bears. "What's the matter? Are you stuffed?"

Stubbins did not stir.

The Bears crowded beneath the shelf on which he sat, staring up at him, troubled and annoyed.

"Come on down, Stubbins!" said Bitty in his clear little voice, and with a wild leap, scattering a white cloud of sugar, Stubbins was among them, laughing, shouting, and clinging to them.

Golden Syrup took the opportunity to "clear up," as he called it, but it was only the sugar which he tidied away, and he used no duster or brush.

As the Bears climbed into bed that night, wearied out with their exciting day, Stubbins said in rather a small voice, "I didn't see the waron, Albert, but I remembered it all the whole time."

"Don't be a little stupid, Stubbins," said the Bears mechanically, "and get off to sleep."

Stubbins rolled over into a little ball and fell asleep with a happy smile on his simple, round face.

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE TELEPHONE

BITTY and the Bears were in anxious consultation. In a little circle they sat, Bitty in the middle on an upside down egg-cup, his legs crossed, his arms folded, very deep in thought.

"The point *is*," he said at last, "we have got to arrange it somehow that there is no chance of anyone buying Stubbins again."

"Because, you mean, another time we might not be clever enough to rescue him?" asked Lord Rushington.

"Speak for yourself," said Bitty, frowning. "I don't mean that at all, but accidents will happen and Stubbins *will* believe everything he is told." Bitty spoke in a low voice, for the furry ball curled motionless in the corner was the sleeping Stubbins, exhausted by the adventures and alarms of the day before.

Suddenly Bitty sprang to his feet, his tiny face lit up. "I know," he cried excitedly, "*I* know. Why shouldn't he go to school for a little while, a day-school? Perhaps he would learn sense, and it would keep him out of the way during shopping hours without hurting his feelings."

Albert looked a bit doubtful. "I don't believe there are any schools for bears about here," he said.

"Well, send him to a boys' school; they would love him, everybody does."

"We should have to ask Sandy," said Albert thoughtfully.

"Ask Sandy what?" said Stubbins, rubbing his eyes and joining the circle.

"Would you like to go to a proper boys' school, Stub, for

a little while, and learn to be much the cleverest of us all?" asked Bitty persuasively.

Stubbins's eyes sparkled through his tousled fur; he had not yet used his brush, and a certain amount of sugar still clung to him. "Oh my! Oh my! Oh my!" he said happily. "Yes, I would. Did Sandy say I could?"

"You can telephone and ask him," put in Albert. "There's a telephone over there; you can ask him yourself."

Stubbins scrambled up the leg of the stool which stood in front of the table on which was the telephone and unhooked the receiver. He laid it on the table and sat down on the speaking end, thinking it was a nice little stool, and put his face inside the ear-piece; a sharp brr-brr coming from near his tail caused him to spring up in a fright. A far off, raucous little voice said, "Number, please."

"Number, please?" said Stubbins to himself. "Now, what does that mean? Sandy!" he bawled down the telephone. "Oh, Sandy, is that you? We're having such lots of fun, and now I'm going to a great 'normous school for proper boys, and I'm going to be turned most frightfully clever, and——"

"What number do you want?" said the raucous little voice.

'How cross he sounds,' thought Stubbins. "Oh, I would think about forty boys, or twenty," he said out loud.

"What's *your* number?" came the angry little voice.

"Me? Oh, there's only one of me; I suppose I'm one," said the puzzled Stubbins.

"Well, you ring off," said the voice, getting more and more annoyed.

'Ring? How can I ring?' thought poor Stubbins, who

was most anxious to carry through this business well without asking help from the others. At this moment he saw close to the telephone what he described to himself as a little silver cup, it might well be a bell so, getting to his feet, he hit it with all his might with the receiver. The noise showed him that it was undoubtedly a bell of some sort, and he scrambled down to the floor and trotted across to the others, very well pleased.

The Bears, who had been listening with all their ears, were convulsed, and Bitty had turned his face to the wall and was pretending to be busy re-buttoning his coat. Sleepie and Golden Syrup were rolling together on the floor, pretending they were laughing at their own game. Lord Rushington made no pretence : he was laughing till the tears rolled down his cheeks. The sympathetic Albert alone was grave.

"He said, he said," panted Stubbins, "he said——" Stubbins was getting mixed up and rather doubtful. "Well, anyhow, I may go if there are not more than forty boys and only one of——" Even Stubbins felt there was something wrong here and he repeated a little lamely, "Anyhow, I may go."

"Good," said Albert. "Now you go away and take some fresh air in the garden." Then, as Stubbins trotted obediently off, "You see what you can do, Rushie, since you are so amused."

Lord Rushington, rather taken aback, pulled himself together and lounged over to the telephone, climbed upon the table and looked doubtfully at it.

"The number is one-six-seven-eight Homestead," called out Albert.

Lord Rushington drew a long breath, seized the receiver and quickly said the number into each end in turn so as to be sure to be right. He listened till sounds told him which *was*

He sat down on the speaking end.

The only *one in a beautiful cap.*

the right end to listen at and then pushed his furry ear close to it; confused sounds and talking were heard.

"And I told him he couldn't possibly come to dinner," said a woman's voice. "I told him we have chicken and six people; it can't possibly go round seven."

Lord Rushington knew this was not Sandy speaking and, most indignant that anyone should use what he considered his and Sandy's telephone alone, he shouted out, "Then eat a little less yourself; then there would be enough for him."

A dead silence greeted this remark: then an icy voice said, "Will you kindly get off the line?"

Lord Rushington glanced down to see if he was on it and, seeing nothing but the table beneath him, shouted angrily, "I'm not on the line."

Here Albert pushed the furious Lord Rushington off the table and put up Sleepie, who had woken up very anxious to try too. Sleepie investigated the instrument, decided that the ear-piece was meant to speak through, laid it on the table, found the mouth-piece a comfortable prop for his fat little tummy and, lying across it, he poked his face inside the ear-phone and said in a hurried whisper, "Sandy, we want to know if Stubbins may go to a proper boys' school, 'cause he got sold yesterday and nearly he didn't escape, and nearly he got carried away by a horrid, horrid woman, and we don't want that, and he didn't want that one bit, so please, Sandy, may he go to school?" And Sleepie lay down comfortably to get an answer . . .

"*Ouch!*" Sleepie leapt to his feet; Bitty had pricked him lightly with his needle. "And what answer have you got?" he asked him severely.

Sleepie hung his head down. "Well, I don't *exactly* know," he said vaguely. "I don't think it was absolutely, perfectly clear."

"Nor do I," said Bitty. "You had better go and join Stubbins in the garden."

And Sleepie hurried away, leaving the arrangements to be made by Albert and Bitty.

CHAPTER IX

STUBBINS GOES TO SCHOOL

THE Bears worked all that day and late into the night to make all ready for Stubbins to be placed safely out of the way at school. The shop was shut and everyone willingly gave what help they were able to. The telephone message had been safely given and the answer came, Stubbins might try school. Albert took some money from their box and visited a shop, coming home with some small pieces of grey and of red flannel. From this, with much heavy breathing and labour, they cut out a small pair of grey shorts and a red blazer and cap. When they had sewed these they went to bed very tired indeed.

Next morning all was happy bustle. No bride could have been more carefully dressed by more attendants than was the excited Stubbins. He tried to put his legs down his sleeves and was very muddled about how to wear his shorts, but Bitty, sitting above on a shelf where he had been put in case someone stepped on him in the commotion, gave his advice as one who issues orders from the bridge, and at last Stubbins was quite ready, every hair brushed, his face beaming, and, as a last glory, in his hand a little case with exercise books cut to half their size and short ends of pencils sharply pointed.

The Bears crowded to the door to see him start. Albert had decided he should go alone. "You mustn't seem to be baby-ish, Stub," he said. "It's only a short way down that quite straight road; you can't get lost."

"No, I'm very big now, aren't I?" said Stubbins. "I'm practically a real boy."

Lord Rushington was a little vexed at being out of the picture and could not forbear remarking, "*Boys* are not covered with fur." But Stubbins agreed with him so warmly, saying, "No, of course not, Rushie, but just a furry kind of boy," that he felt quite ashamed. Then Stubbins solemnly shook hands all round (Sleepie, half-waking, said, "How d'you do?" vaguely), and started off.

The boys in the little school were most startled and highly delighted when the teacher led in a small bear, dressed as they were, but forgetting to remove his very large and clumsily made red cap which was pulled down over his ears. His bright, china-blue eyes glanced happily from side to side; Stubbins beamed upon them all as he was led up the aisle to a little chair set before a desk.

"Take your cap off," said Miss Brown, his new teacher. "We never wear caps in the house."

"Don't we?" said Stubbins, rather disappointed, for he felt his cap to be his crowning glory and marked him off as an almost boy. He seized it by the peak and pulled it forward hard; he had no idea how to take it off, pulling only seemed to extinguish him more, but a boy sitting behind him pushed it up from behind, and it came off so suddenly that Stubbins nearly over-balanced. All the boys laughed to see the furry little head.

Miss Brown told them she would start with a history lesson and would read them the story of William the Conqueror. Stubbins thought this a nice easy way of doing lessons and listened with all his ears. Indeed, so attentive and quiet was he that, when she had finished, Miss Brown said, "I am going to ask Stubbins to tell us this story again in his own words to see if he understood it all. Come up on the platform, Stubbins."

Stubbins, quite pink beneath his fur, climbed the

two steps to the platform and turned round to face the class; breathing very loudly, he began, speaking very quickly:

"Once there was a Kin called William Conkrer, and he had a friend called Norman. William and Norman came across the sea because they wanted a little Island, and a man called Harold came hasting to meet him, and William came hasting to meet *him*, and it was called Hasting, and they battled and they battled and they battled and there was a place there called Battle because they battled, and William hit Harold with an arrow and Harold went bang dead, and Norman and William lived happily ever after. Amen."

This was received by a burst of laughter and clapping, and Stubbins, laughing and clapping a little too, climbed down from the platform and up again on to his little stool.

Shortly after this, a bell rang and Stubbins found himself trooping along with a lot of boys to the gymnasium. Here they were all lined up against the wall according to heights; he being far the smallest was right at the end. Four ropes were let down from the ceiling and four boys at a time were called up to climb them; some climbed fairly well, some clung desperately about a yard above the ground, clasping and unclasping their legs in a vain attempt to get a grip and climb upwards. But, when it came to Stubbins's turn, the small Bear made quite a sensation. Up, up the rope he ran like a monkey, but, alas, in his first spring to catch hold of it he sprang right out of his little grey knickers, for the Bears knew nothing of belts or braces and there was nothing at all to keep them up. But up went Stubbins, with great ease, to the very top, leaving the little garment in a heap at the foot of the rope. Reaching the top, he swung across to the next one ('Very, very clever,' thought the watching boys, though perhaps rather showing off') and dropped back on

to the floor, picking up his shorts and asking in a puzzled way, " How do we put these on ? " He was hustled away to be re-dressed, and his trousers were tied on with string, which proved to be very necessary as Stubbins showed an astonishing activity, vaulting and leaping, swinging along the bars far better and far quicker than any of the boys could do. Stubbins was having his day.

They returned to the class-room and struggled with arithmetic for some time, all Stubbins's sums being marked "Wrong," which was not surprising, as the little Bear had not the slightest idea what it was all about and only wrote down all the numbers he knew wherever there seemed to be any place for them.

But later, at football, he began to shine again. At first some awkwardness arose when Stubbins, obeying orders not to let anyone take the ball, seized it in his arms and ran up a tree with it ; but when once he understood it was usual to play on the ground, no one was so nimble, dodging and leaping and running between people's legs.

By the time they were called in for the last lesson he was in a state of heat and happiness which he had never felt before, and also decidedly tired. The last lesson was to be dictation and the teacher explained it was going to be very, very difficult. It was by Shakespeare. Miss Brown asked the boys a good many questions about Shakespeare, but Stubbins was not interested ; he prepared his pencil and paper and did not listen. Suddenly he realized Miss Brown was asking him a question.

" When did he die ? "

" Who ? " asked Stubbins.

" Shakespeare, of course ; pay attention," said Miss Brown sharply.

" Who is Shakespeare ? " asked Stubbins, not very interested in her answer, to which, indeed, he did not listen, but repeated, " Shakespeare " to himself, rather liking the name.

" Well, can you tell me when he was born ? " came Miss Brown's voice very sharply.

" Who ? " asked Stubbins, jumping a little.

" *Shakespeare*, you stupid boy," almost shouted Miss Brown.

" Ah, she called me a boy," said Stubbins to himself, and out loud he said carelessly, " No, I can't tell you ; I didn't know he had died."

Miss Brown, he thought, didn't seem at all pleased ; perhaps Shakespeare was a friend of hers and she was sorry to know he had died. His thoughts were broken into by her sharp command to take their pencils ; she was going to dictate to them " To be or not to be." They were to write it down. She spoke very slowly, but it was far too quick for poor Stubbins, who was beginning to feel quite worn out after his unusual morning, and with tongue out he struggled slowly along, very soon falling far behind, but for some time trying to keep on, moved by a vague memory of what he thought he had heard her say.

" Two bees or not two bees, that is the question," he wrote laboriously, ' and a very silly question too,' he thought. ' Surely whoever it was could count up to two and see how many there were ? Or perhaps one was hidden under a leaf, so they were not sure ? ' Stubbins pulled himself together and rushed on.

" Whether this cobra of mine's to suffer the stings "—how dreadfully cruel, and *do* bees sting cobras ? He vaguely heard presently, ' or to take my palms against a sea of bubbles "—that was *lovely* ; Stubbins had a picture of himself walking across a sandy shore carrying a palm in his hand, towards a sea heaving and shining with myriads of many-

coloured bubbles, blowing and bursting in the sunshine ; he felt the palm in his paw whipping in the wind. Suddenly he heard Miss Brown saying they were to learn it by heart. " Work hard, Stubbins," she said to him, " and when I ask you, you must be able to say it."

Very much relieved, Stubbins put his fingers in his ears and repeated over and over again to himself, " it, it, it." And when he thought he had learned it securely he looked up with such a bright smile that she pounced upon him. " Stubbins, you can't say it yet, surely ? "

" Yes, I can, Miss Brown. I am sure I can."

" Very well then," said Miss Brown, " stand up and let us all hear you say it."

Stubbins stood up and, putting his hands behind his back, he said in a very loud, clear voice, " It."

" That's not funny," said his teacher very coldly.

Stubbins did not think it was meant to be and said so.

" I'll give you one more chance to say it." Miss Brown spoke now in an angry voice.

" I—it." Stubbins wavered a little, but still he was sure that was the word he had been told to learn.

" *Very* well." Her voice sounded icy. " Come up here to me."

Stubbins stumbled forward ; she led him up to the platform, placed him on a little stool and on his head a tall pointed cap with " Dunce " written on it. Never had Stubbins been so proud in all his life. Happily he smiled upon the boys, bearing his high honour, he hoped, modestly. *He*, Stubbins, the little Bear, sitting select and alone upon the platform, the *only* one in a beautiful cap. Smiling, he sat till class was dismissed and he with it : he hoped for a minute he might be given the glorious thing to carry home and show Albert how he had tried and how well he had

been rewarded. But, no—the Teacher disappeared through one door, taking the cap with her, and the boys ran noisily out through another, Stubbins following slowly after. He was *so* tired now—really he didn't know how he could walk home. He sat down on the doorstep and leaned back against the wall.

" Hullo, hullo," said a very tiny voice at his feet.

" Bitty, Bitty, Bitty ! " cried Stubby, enchanted. " You came to meet me ? And oh, Bitty, I have been so good, you can't think, not anybody at all called me a norful silly, not one at all," and into Bitty's sympathetic little ear he poured his whole story.

Bitty listened and nodded and thought to himself, ' This is too much for Stub—next time it'll be the cane and then his poor feelings will be so dreadfully hurt.' Out loud he said, " You're tired now ; come on and we will hitch-hike back. Now, you do as I tell you ; hide behind that bush, but first lift me up on to that branch. When you see a car stop, run and jump up on the luggage thing behind."

Bitty swung on his branch till a fast, shining black car came along ; judging his time neatly, Bitty dropped upon the roof. Instantly, sliding and struggling on the slippery surface, he was swept by the wind off the car backwards and off and landed, light as a dead leaf, in the grass near Stubbins.

Bitty, furious, turned his head to the hedge and swore, his own particular swearing—all the things he hated most ; " Coldish fat ! Pinched finger ! Slugs and worms ! " Relieved by this, he asked Stubbins to lift him up again. This time he waited till an open car passed beneath him, and this time he dropped into it safely. Climbing along quietly towards the driver, he drew his needle and plunged it lightly into his leg. The car swerved violently, the driver swore some quite other kind of swears, and drew up to the side of

the road to see if there was a wasp there. Stubbins ran out and jumped up behind, and so they travelled merrily to their own front gate where both dropped off and Stubbins picked up Bitty and ran panting in to tell the Bears of all that had happened to him, ending up with the description of the fine cap he had so proudly worn.

"What was written on the cap?" asked Albert, after he had praised and complimented the proud little Bear.

"Well, I didn't quite understand it," said Stubbins in a puzzled voice. It had D U N C. I *think* it means, 'Do you not see?'"

"Why," burst out Lord Rushington and Golden Syrup together, "you are a *norful* silly, Stubbins, it means—ouch!!" Bitty had poked his needle first into one's leg and then into the other's.

"*What* were you going to say?" asked Bitty sweetly, holding the needle ready like a sword. "Do repeat it." The two Bears eyed the needle and thought better of it.

"I was only saying he had been very clever this time, not silly like he sometimes is," said Lord Rushington sulkily.

Bitty sheathed his needle. "I think so too," he said. "Stubbins, we are proud of you; now you get to bed before you follow Sleepie's example. You've been a very, very good boy." And, smiling and nodding, little Stubbins, who was already half-asleep, curled himself up on his bed and quickly became quite asleep.

CHAPTER X

ORANGE PEKOE

IT was Golden Syrup's birthday. The Bears had asked him for a list of his wants and he had laboriously made one out. It read:

Mi wonts
Hony
Shuger
Sweets
Food
Sumthing to eet
Enny thing to eet
(or drinc)

Really, Golden Syrup was almost too greedy, thought the Bears, but he was a dear. They decided he didn't know any better, for the Bears hardly ever thought or said unkind things about each other.

The sale of Bears had been given up; it was thought too dangerous. Their beloved Stubbins might be chosen again; the risk was too great, and anyhow they were doing quite well and had made enough money on their first sales to replace some of their goods. The exhibition of Bitty, too, in his little room, brought in a steady flow of pennies. When the village school broke up there would be quite a queue of children waiting to see "the darling little boy," and indeed the same children came several times a week to see him. Sometimes they brought him bunches of the tiniest flowers they could find, eye-brights and tormentils, a daisy plant, or a piece of frogbit to float as a water-lily.

They also brought him thimbles set firmly in plasticine, and these filled with water made handsome flower-vases standing on his tiny tables. Bitty was very proud. The children even began bringing little pieces of doll's-house furniture, and one brought a glass box which made a lovely green-house for him where he could sit on his little chair or lie on his scrap of a fur rug among his rows of thimbles, each with its bright bouquet of minute flowers.

But the day that Golden Syrup's birthday dawned Bitty was ill. The Bears found he had not left his tiny bed, but lay very still upon it; his face on his pillow was like a white almond. The Bears stood anxiously round him; never before had they so regretted their rather clumsy, furry paws. If only they had had neat little fingers, they thought sadly, how much they might have done for him; but their paws always seemed to upset something, they could certainly never re-make his little bed. Bitty attended to all his room himself, and now he hardly moved, and they could do nothing to help him.

"Those children must have *breeved* on him," said Albert heavily, "and given him a nasty 'fluenza or something. Bitty, darling, could we give you a drink or something?" But Bitty only moved his head restlessly and turned his face from them, so that they only saw a tiny tuft of beech-gold hair. They covered his window from the glare and went away very solemnly.

"You'll have to put off your birthday, Goldie," said Albert. "We were going to take you out and give you a feast, but we can't possibly now."

Two large tears rolled down Golden Syrup's face. "And I was going to enjoy it so awfully much," he sobbed. "And now I can't go—I'm crying because Bitty is so ill, you know," and Golden Syrup burst into real crying,

through which the Bears heard the confused words, "Honey—meant to have brown sugar, Oh, oh, oh!"

The Bears looked at each other gravely; then Albert got up, went to the counter, and returned with a shilling and a sixpence in his paw. "You can have this, Goldie, and go out and buy what you want yourself," he said.

Golden Syrup cried louder still. "Oh, oh," he sobbed again. "Poor, poor Bitty, and I was going to have such a—such a—oh, poor Bitty!"

"You had better stop howling or poor Bitty will hear you," said Albert shortly: then, remembering that it was, after all, a very disappointing kind of birthday, he drew out his red, spotted handkerchief and wiped Golden Syrup's wet face briskly up and down—it was done very thoroughly and was most uncomfortable.

"Away you go, Goldie; don't cry any more. Perhaps Bitty will be better when you get back."

Golden Syrup sniffed hard, shook hands all round, and with the shilling clutched in one paw and the sixpence in another and a slow smile appearing on his fat face, he lumbered down the steps and disappeared.

The Bears looked at each other; then they carefully looked away again.

"Put up a notice to say the shop is closed," said Albert. "I'm going to sit with Bitty."

Golden Syrup set off as fast as he could to the shops. When he reached them he walked slowly along, gazing into the window of any shop which sold food, doing most difficult sums in his head. So many buns, so much chocolate—or a tin of honey and no buns? At last he came to a shop which sold sweets and toys: such delicious sweets. The fat Bear's mouth watered as he looked at the lumps of cocoanut ice, the slabs of chocolate—oh, and look at that toffee!

And fudge ! And there were those darling little chocolate things like farthings, only all over white sugar spots ! Golden Syrup's pink tongue licked and re-licked his lips as he began to do feverish sums, leaning against the shop window.

Having at last worked out the spending of his one and six in the way which would give him the best and the most, he hoped, his eye rose a little higher, and he saw on a long glass-shelf above the sweets a row of Teddy and Koala Bears of every size. Golden Syrup smiled as he looked at them. The first one on the left was a majestic fellow, as big as Albert ; next him came a white Bear ; then several of a rather smaller size, and at the far end a very small orange-coloured Bear. 'Rather the colour of me,' he thought.

As Golden Syrup looked along the line, he suddenly thought he saw a quick flash, as if something had moved. He looked back, but no, they were all sitting motionless, their paws held stiffly towards him, their eyes staring ahead, each Bear with his price round his arm. The very slight flash of movement which Golden Syrup thought he had seen had left a most uncomfortable feeling in his mind. He knew well enough, every Bear knows, that the ones you see in toy-shops are just stuffed Bear-toys ; they are not alive, they never have been, and never will be, alive. But just now and then, very rarely, a real Bear is found among them, and there is only one way to tell these, their eyes move. In all other ways they remain as still and as apparently senseless as the toy-Bears with which they are imprisoned.

All Bears know the tragedy which lies behind this, all Bears have been there themselves, they know the horrible anxiety and fear which fills a Bear's heart. Supposing Sandy had not bought *him*, thought Golden Syrup. He bent his head low over the trays of sweets in the window as

if absorbed, then raised his head suddenly. Yes, he saw distinctly the sudden flicker of a little black beady eye which had been turned towards him and which had flicked back at his sudden movement. It came from the little orange-coloured Bear at the end of the row.

Golden Syrup stood looking at him carefully. He was about four inches high, he thought, bright orange all over, sitting stiffly with his arms held out in front of him : Golden Syrup remembered that most uncomfortable position in which the shopman sat the Bears. He looked hard at the little orange Bear, but no sign of life did he give. Golden Syrup marched into the shop.

Once inside, his eye was at once drawn to the lower shelves on which were all those delicious sweets. He passed slowly along the line, pricing each of them. There were some slabs of chocolate for a penny a slab ; supposing the little orange Bear was a shilling, and it might easily be only sixpence, he could still have six great bars of chocolate ! He raised his head.

"How much is that little orange-coloured Bear, there at the end of the row ?" he asked.

The shop assistant was getting bored with him : she snatched down the little Bear and inspected his ticket, and snapped out, "One and sixpence," and bumped him back on his shelf. Golden Syrup walked straight out of the shop.

For a long time he paced to and fro, his hands clasped behind his back (not an easy thing to do this, for he was fat and his arms were short), his head bent and his eyes cast down, but not so low that they did not see the anxious beady eyes, like black-headed pins, which followed every movement he made from that high glass-shelf.

"*Agony !*" thought Golden Syrup. "Not one single scrap of a sweet, and I know how I love them ! I just *must*

have them, that's all. I'm greedy ; it's not my fault. I'll just go in and buy some fudge and some toffee and some of those slabs of chocolate. *I* can't help it if I want them, can I ? I didn't choose to be greedy ; I just was born greedy : it isn't my fault."

Golden Syrup approached the shop-door, his eyes still bent downwards. A child was standing on the step of the shop. "I'll have the little yellow one," she was saying in a shrill voice, "the little yellow Bear. My kitty wants one, to play it's a mouse with—I want the little yellow Bear."

Golden Syrup darted between her legs into the shop, ran nimbly up a high stool, climbed to the shelf, snatched the little orange Bear, rushed to the shop assistant, panted out, "I'm taking this Bear ! Here's one and sixpence : no, you needn't wrap it up," darted between the little girl's legs again and was out and away. He ran for quite a long way before he felt safe : then he sat down on a stone and examined his prize. "Hullo," he said. "Are you glad I bought you ?"

No answer.

"What's your name ?"

No answer.

"You needn't be afraid now," said Golden Syrup in a consoling voice. "You're quite safe now. You're going to live with us—us Bears. You'll be quite safe. What's your name !"

No answer.

Golden Syrup walked on, holding the little Bear to his chest. A strange glow was rising inside him. 'I did a very unselfish thing,' he thought. 'I, Golden Syrup, *I* did an ungreedy thing !' Here he gave a great skip. 'I do believe I'm not greedy.' He walked along, the wonderful glow still rising within him.

"Are you glad I bought you ?"

" Showing off," said the Bear unexpectedly, looking down at him.

Golden Syrup had not exactly enjoyed knowing he was thought greedy ; he had not enjoyed seeing the Bears look at each other when he snatched at the biggest bun or took the last sweet : he hadn't minded it quite so much as he would have minded going without the biggest bun or the last sweet ; but he certainly hadn't enjoyed it. Now the feeling that he had given up the good things he wanted to eat for the sake of a little orange Bear—a stranger to him—made this glorious feeling rise and swell. Golden Syrup walked on air.

He looked at the little stranger. " Are you hungry ? " he said very suddenly.

" Yes," said a very small voice.

" Albert will give you something as soon as we get home." Golden Syrup was delighted to get a word at last. " What's your name ? "

" Pekoe, said the little voice.

Golden Syrup gave a little skip and walked along chattering. He told Pekoe all their adventures and all their plans : he told him of Bitty and of his illness. He told him Bitty was just a tiny bit smaller than he, Pekoe, was.

" P r'aps I could work for him," said the small voice.

Golden Syrup began to think this over and was still thinking of it when he found himself back at the shop and went bounding in. The Bears were standing round Bitty's table, still looking very grave. Golden Syrup put Pekoe down on the edge of the table and, catching at Albert, began pouring out his story. Albert listened with his usual kindness and patience to the long, excited tale, and followed the tugging Golden Syrup to the table to inspect his purchase. To their surprise the little orange Bear had entered Bitty's room.

As they looked in, they saw for the first time that instead of having paws as they had, he had very small felt-like

fingers, and with these he was already working wonders. Bitty's tossed bed was tidy, his pillow had been turned over and with his scrap of sponge Pekoe was washing his face. Bitty, already a little revived, was looking at him with the greatest interest.

The Bears withdrew on tip-toe to the next room, shut the door softly, seized the excited Golden Syrup in their arms, and squeezed him till he could hardly breathe. "You've been *wonderful*, Goldie, absolutely wonderful," said Albert solemnly. "You've saved Bitty and do you know why? *Because you were not greedy!*" Golden Syrup turned bright pink, he hung his head and twisted his paw, but a delighted smile lingered round the corners of his mouth. "And now, Golden Syrup, come with us: we will show you our surprise."

The Bears trooped round him and led him to the table on which a glorious feast was spread, buns, honey, sugar, sweets, chocolate, and fudge! "From Sandy," said Albert simply.

The Bears sat down quickly. Golden Syrup's paw shot out to seize a large sugar cake, larger than the others on the plate in front of Albert; then as suddenly the little paw shot back. "*I'm not greedy*," said Golden Syrup to himself, and again the happy glow shot up inside him and climbed slowly up towards his face, ending by spreading his mouth in a wide and happy smile. 'This feels as nice,' thought Golden Syrup to himself, 'this really does feel as nice as the very best fudge.'

CHAPTER XI

SHOWING OFF

LORD RUSHINGTON was out for a walk. You could hardly call it a walk, for he strolled very slowly along, making up a little song as he went, all about his own glory and the great things he had done and meant to do. Turning a corner in the lane, he came suddenly upon a tall, very thin Bear lolling against the fence, staring up into the tree above him.

Lord Rushington stopped in front of him and stared. The Bear wore a fine pair of plum-coloured velvet trousers, and Lord Rushington was enraged at the sight. The Bears, as a rule, went about just bear, as you might say, but they all possessed bright-coloured little jackets and waistcoats and, since Stubbins had been to school, clumsily made shorts which they wore when they wished to be grand. Lord Rushington always wished to be grand, but, the day being warm, he had come out without any, and it was very bitter to him to meet a Bear dressed actually in *velvet trousers*.

The Bears' idea of grandeur was to have lots of buttons on their clothes—it did not matter where, or what kind or size of button, the great thing was to have plenty. Lord Rushington's idea of grandeur being grander than any of them, he was apt to snip any specially fine button from their coats and sew it on his own—besides, he often picked them up, and the back of his coat and shorts were quite uncomfortably covered with buttons. If only he had them on now, he thought, gazing enviously at the velvet trousers.

He went and lolled against the fence close by, a very

grand loll with his feet stretched out and crossed. The paling against which he leant was unfortunately not nailed but only balanced, and Lord Rushington crashed through it and rolled down a bank into a ditch. He climbed out burning with rage and shame. The other Bear was still staring calmly up into the tree. Lord Rushington brushed himself down and came near him.

"Hullo," he said.

"Hullo," said the Bear.

"What are you looking at?" asked Lord Rushington.

"The tree," said the Bear without glancing at him.

The conversation came to a stop. Lord Rushington sauntered back the way he had come until he reached the bend in the lane, when he ran home as fast as he could, put on his grandest coat, and raced back to the corner, lounged round it and approached the Bear, who was still leaning against the fence.

"Hullo," he said.

"Hullo again," said the unmoved Bear, still not looking at him.

"I suppose you think yourself pretty smart," said Lord Rushington very rudely.

"No," said the Bear.

"Well, you don't look it, anyhow," snapped Lord Rushington.

"No," said the Bear again.

"I call it showing off," went on Lord Rushington, determined to attract his attention.

"Do you?" said the Bear.

There was a pause. Lord Rushington remembered he had three farthings in his pocket and began to chink them loudly together.

"I'm just going shopping," he remarked. "I've got

heaps of money. It looks a bit odd, you know, my dear fellow, to have trousers like that and no top of any sort," Lord Rushington tittered rather rudely; "anyone would think . . ."

The Bear did not answer and Lord Rushington turned away towards a little shop which stood some distance along the lane. He had no intention of spending his three farthings, but as the shop-windows each side of the door stuck out much further than the door, he could apparently march into the shop while really stopping outside the door. Here he saw on the ground a piece of paper and, picking up two stones, he wrapped them up in it, making an exciting-looking parcel which he put under his arm.

He was about to return to insist on being noticed, admired, and envied by that strange Bear in velvet trousers, when, who should he see through the glass door of the shop but the hateful boy who had once bought poor Stubbins. Lord Rushington ran round the corner of the shop like a flash and hid. Soon the boy came out: he was laden with parcels of all sizes and was saying in a loud, boasting voice, "I've got *heaps* of money to spend."

Lord Rushington felt just a little uncomfortable. The boy had a smart little cane tucked under his arm, and while with both his hands he clutched his packages the cane slid to the ground and fell in the road. Lord Rushington stole along behind him, laid his paw very softly on the little cane, picked it up unnoticed, waited under a bush till the boy was out of sight and then, swinging the cane in an airy manner so as to make its silver top flash in the sun, he returned to the fence where the Bear was.

The cane was too long for him and as he drew near he gave himself a smart rap on the nose which drew tears from his eyes and filled his heart with rage. He planted himself

in front of the velvet trousers, opened his jacket to show the buttons on his waistcoat, and spoke in his most grandest voice.

"What do you think I've been doing?"

"Showing off," said the Bear unexpectedly, looking down at him.

Lord Rushington was very much taken aback.

"I didn't mean that," he said hastily. "I've been shopping." Here he jingled his three farthings again. "Anything I can get you, my dear fellow? You know, if you'll excuse me saying so, it looks very odd wearing trousers and nothing else; people might think you haven't got anything else, ha-ha."

"I haven't," said the Bear.

Lord Rushington was even more taken aback. "What d'you mean, you haven't?" he asked.

"I mean, I haven't," answered the Bear.

"Oh," said Lord Rushington, "*I* have, lots. Lots and lots," he added louder as the Bear didn't answer him. There was a pause.

"Where's your home?" asked Lord Rushington at last.

"I haven't got one."

Lord Rushington drew nearer, a strange feeling coming over him. "But where did you sleep last night?"

"In that tree," said the Bear, nodding towards it.

"And the night before?" asked Lord Rushington anxiously, drawing nearer.

The Bear slid down to a sitting position and laid his head down on his plum-velvet knees. Lord Rushington could hardly hear what he said, but just caught the words ". . . escape from a shop . . ."

Instantly the little Bear's heart was touched. "Oh, you *poor*," he exclaimed, coming close up to him, and this time

he was not speaking in grandeur. "*Oh*, I am sorry! *Oh*, I am a beast! Look, I *was* just showing off like you said." Lord Rushington hastily unrolled his little parcel and the two stones fell out. "Look, I didn't shop at all really, and I've only got three farthings; I always keep them to make a sort of proud jingle. I'm hateful! Look, I'm going to throw them away!" Lord Rushington cast the three precious farthings into a cart-rut. "I've got a lovely home, almost all Bears; you come with me, *we* know what shops are like; come along. Albert will look after you—" (here Lord Rushington picked up the three farthings quickly and dropped them into his pocket again). He took the Bear's arm. "Now, tell me all your history," he begged. "Mind my cane—and that's only picked up from a very nasty boy."

At these words the Bear stood still. "A very nasty boy?" he said faintly.

"Yes," said Lord Rushington, "a hateful boy," and he began to tell the Bear about him.

"Had he got red hair and spots?" panted out the velvet-trousered Bear.

"Yes, and a beastly fat face."

"It must be the same one—Oh, you don't know, you don't know—he bought me; he said he hated all Bears and he was going to have me and teach me what's what. He took me to his house; it's horrible—he's got dead birds and things there, and he tied me to a board, and I've been there two days with nothing to eat, and then I bit through all the knots and climbed out. But I know he'll find me, and I can't walk any further, and—and——" And to Lord Rushington's horror the Bear fell down at his feet in a faint.

Lord Rushington stared at him helplessly, then took to his

heels and ran home as fast as ever he could, seized Albert, and poured out his eager story. Albert threw down the money he was counting and polishing before putting it away and ran out into the road followed by a stream of Bears. "Of course we'll bring him here and look after him, Rushie," he panted as he ran.

They reached the bend in the road, turned it, and came to the place where the Bear had lain—there was no one there. They searched the grass at the side of the road, they ran up and down, shouting. There was no sign or sound of the Bear in the velvet trousers.

"You ought to have dragged him on one side and covered him with grass or leaves or something," said Albert,

"Or p'r'aps he's been runned over," said Sleepie.

"I don't see any squash on the road," said Golden Syrup, marching up and down anxiously.

"If he's not been run over, and I can't see that he has," said Albert seriously, "then he's been stolen."

'And who by?' thought all the Bears, looking at each other seriously.

At that moment Lord Rushington who, filled with remorse, had rushed here and there looking in all possible and impossible places and had finally rushed up a tree, shrieked loudly and came scrambling down. "I saw—I saw——" he panted. "I saw that great wicked boy—I knew him by his red scarf fluttering, and he is dragging poor Velvet along behind him, and going along and along——"

Albert turned to the others. "All go home," he said gravely, "for I am going to make a Track; when I know what house he has gone to, I will come back quickly and then we will see what we can do."

The Bears walked home, all talking at once and breathing

very hard, to tell Bitty, who, thanks to Orange Pekoe's clever nursing, was his spry self again, the dreadful thing which had happened. And Albert went silently away, padding through the dust.

CHAPTER XII

TO THE RESCUE

THE Bears were quite worn out with conversation by the time Albert returned to them. Over and over again they discussed what might have happened and what they would and could do. They sat in a circle, all talking at the same time, all following their own thoughts, all deaf to each other, all breathing very heavily. When Albert at last appeared, they greeted him with shouts and almost deafened him by their flood of questions.

Albert was grave and business-like. He sat down against the wall, the Bears making a half-circle round him, and, Bitty on his shoulder, told his tale. He had followed the spotty boy to his house, about three miles away he thought it was—it was dark before he got there, and he waited outside the house till he saw a glimmer of light appear in one of the upper windows, and then climbed up by a creeper and peeped in. The creeper had broken when he was half-way up, and Albert had slithered down again and had had to find a pipe up which he could swarm, and when he got so that he could peep through the crack, poor Velvet Trousers had already been tied hand and foot to a board. All the Bears drew in their breath and their eyes grew very round and very horrified.

"He was lying on his face on the board," Albert told them. Then the spotty boy had been called away to supper and bed before he could do any more, and Albert had come back as quickly as he could to fetch help. There was no time to lose, for, though the horrible boy might wait till the morning to go on hurting his poor captive, he might have

He was lying on his face on the board.

Little Pekoe was found to be struggling with a pepper-pot almost as large as himself.

some free time between supper and bed, and they must take no chances. Every Bear became, at once, very active: each seized what weapons they could think of; Bitty crowded his little case with needles and leapt back on to Albert. The Bears were off.

Quickly, but very quietly, they made all the haste they could in a long line, trotting on the darkest side of the road, Albert leading them. It seemed a very long trot to poor fat Syrup before Albert stopped in front of a gate which just showed white in the darkness.

Under or over the gate the Bears crept and padded very softly up a drive under some overhanging trees. Once close under the walls of the house, Albert stopped, signed to the Bears to keep very quiet and still, found the pipe and climbed up it, Bitty clinging to his fur. He was up there in the darkness for some time and the Bears stood shivering with excitement, little Orange Pekoe holding tightly to Stubbins's paw. A rustling of the leaves of the creeper told them Albert was climbing down again. He withdrew to the cover of a large bush, squeezed under it, followed by the Bears, and asked them to lay out all the things they had brought with them for the fight.

It was a strange collection of weapons. Bitty had his needles; Lord Rushington had a knife—it looked very large and fierce, but it was made of rubber; Albert had some strong string, Sleepie some very weak string; Golden Syrup had a large bun, and Stubbins was empty-handed. Little Pekoe was found to be struggling with a pepper-pot almost as large as himself. The Bears put their heads together while Albert and Bitty whispered to them for a long time.

"Have you all understood?" Albert asked at last, and they all nodded violently. "Then follow me and make no

noise at all. Stubbins, carry Orange Pekoe." Stubbins, very proud to be asked, swung him up over his head and received a shower of pepper on his face. Coughing and choking, he had sense enough left to rush into the bushes till the fit was over, when he came back, very pink, and lifted Pekoe up again, this time most cautiously, Pekoe holding his little paw carefully over the holes of his pepper-pot.

Moving as quietly as they could, they climbed the pipe one by one and gathered in a row on the window-ledge. The window was open and they climbed in very softly and waited a minute for their eyes to get used to the light, for there was a bright fire burning and, after the darkness outside, it seemed very bright. The first thing they saw was poor Velvet Trousers tied to the board. His face was turned towards them and he made a feeble attempt to move when he saw them come in. All the Bears put their paws to their lips as a sign that he should keep very quiet. He was lying on a table, and near the table was a bed, and on the bed lay the fat and spotty-faced boy on his back fast asleep.

Moving very softly, the Bears dropped to the floor. Stubbins and Golden Syrup climbed carefully up one side of the bed, Sleepie and Lord Rushington up the other. Albert, with a great effort, managed to stand with one foot each side of the sleeping boy ; in his paw he held the bun. Bitty alone walked delicately along the boy, holding his needle ready. When he got to his chin, he looked round to see if every one was in their place and then, as they all nodded that they knew what to do, he gave the boy a vigorous prick. At once his mouth flew open to cry out, and at once Albert plunged forward and pushed the bun into it with all his might, and then threw himself down upon it to hold it there, clinging tightly round his neck.

And now began a terrible battle. Sleepie (for once very

wide awake) and Lord Rushington threw themselves on to one of the boy's hands, Stubbins and Syrup on to the other, and clung on for dear life—riding his wrists as if on a see-saw, struggling to hold his fingers, the Bears flew up and down and were whirled around, encouraged by cries from Albert of " Hold on, cling on, stick to it ! "

At last the boy, half-smothered by Albert, became rather exhausted, and the movements of his arms became fainter and weaker, and at last he lay still, glaring furiously at them over the large bun which still stuck half out of his mouth. They seemed to have come to a deadlock : there lay Velvet Trousers ready to be rescued, but the panting Bears did not dare leave go of the hands they held to rescue him. Albert kept pressing firmly against the bun to silence any cries, and the Bears looked at each other in some bewilderment.

" Hook the sheet up over him with your legs, if you can," shouted Bitty. " We'll try to wrap him up like a parcel."

With fearful struggles and scrambles the Bears began to ruck up the bed-clothes, scratching at them as a dog scratches up his bed before lying on it. Bitty danced about on the heaving mass, pricking whatever part of the boy seemed to be struggling most. They rolled the sheet and the blankets, they tucked and pulled and managed at last to make some kind of a roll round him. Albert, tying one end of his string to the bed, ran over and under the bed several times with it and made a clumsy knot.

' That won't hold long,' thought Bitty ; " we must get away quick. Syrup and Rushie," he shouted, " get hold of Velvet and carry him out."

" We can't ; he's fastened down," screamed the Bears.

" Then take him, board and all, and run ! "

Bumping and struggling, they carried poor Velvet to the window on his board, squeezed through and disappeared

from sight. Sleepie and Stubbins rushed after them ; Albert and Bitty were left.

At this moment they heard, to their horror, the sound of the door opening, the light was turned on, and the boy's mother appeared. " *What* on earth is going on in here ? " she asked. Then, seeing the bundle rolling about on the bed and Albert trying to hold it down, she began shrieking, " Oh, you nasty little beast ; oh, it's you, is it ? Paul, Paul ! Are you all right ? You wait till I get a stick ; I'll knock that horrid Bear endways ! Get away, you horrible Bear ! " And she made a grab at Albert now riding high on Paul's kicking legs.

Pekoe, who had remained on the rail-head of the bed, leant forward and threw his pepper into her face, and then, as Paul's face burst out of its cover, red and furious, just below him, he turned his pot upside down over it and gave it two or three little pats to get the last few grains out. Instantly the commotion increased. Paul's first sneeze sent the bun flying out of his mouth and he began shouting, " Help, fire, murder, thieves ! " at the top of his voice till his mother, struggling with her violent sneezes, slipped on the mat and fell on the top of him, which smothered his cries for a moment.

Albert snatched Pekoe with one paw and Bitty with the other and made for the window at top speed. " Draw the curtains right back ! " shouted Bitty as they passed through ; Albert pushed them as he climbed through, sending a bright beam of light out into the darkness. Paul was on his feet by now and at the window ; he grabbed at them and missed them very narrowly as they scrambled out, leaving him at the window still shouting, " Fire, thieves, stop thief ! "

" Don't hurry," panted Bitty, clinging to Albert's fur, " you wait, they'll soon be stopped." And as the exhausted

Bears gathered together in the darkness below they heard running feet and angry voices of men shouting, " *Put* that light out ; put it out at once, I say. Don't you know there's a war on ? "

' *Again*,' thought Stubbins, staring anxiously into the darkness ; ' perhaps I shall see it now.' But all he saw was a man in a helmet who banged on the door of the house—and he saw the light above him go out very suddenly, and heard Paul's voice and his mother's voice change from furious shouting to very meek, excuse-making voices, and the voice of the man in the helmet getting very loud and angry, and being joined to the voice of another man very angry too, talking of Black-outs, and in the noise that followed the Bears picked up the board, and poor Velvet on it, and trotted quietly down the road away back to their shop.

CHAPTER XIII

GOING HOME

ALBERT sat on the floor in the middle of the room, his square feet stuck straight out in front, his big, grave face bent forward a little ; his china-blue eyes were fixed on the ground ; he was trying to be deep in thought, but only one thought would come into his head : 'Let's go home.'

Albert realized dimly it was no longer safe for them to live so near those horrible people from whom they had escaped last night ; besides, they surely had enough money, and he wanted to be home with Sandy again, where he too would be looked after and not have to look after other people all the time. He looked round the room ; on the table, Velvet, now free and safe, lay on a little heap of grass, watched over by Orange Pekoe. A little furry ball beside him was Sleepie, fast asleep. Albert beckoned to Stubbins, Lord Rushington and Golden Syrup, who were sitting together in a corner making faces at each other for fun—they came over and sat down opposite him in a row, looking as grave and responsible as they could.

"I've decided," began Albert in a slow, solemn voice, "that the time has come when we go home and give Sandy all our money for the taxes, but first we must be sure we have enough. Will you bring the drawer of money and we'll count it all up."

The little drawer was pulled out of the table and put down on the floor between them : the Bears began to roll it about and spin the coins ; they felt so much relieved after their time of excitement and strain that they behaved in quite a babyish way. Bitty, from his little glass room, watched

them. He had had a long talk with Albert the night before, after they had all come back, and had what he called "put Ideas into his head," and these ideas were now slowly coming out as Albert's.

"I want your consultations," said Albert in the deep voice which he used when he meant to be listened to. "Taxes must be paid."

"Or else you wouldn't get anywhere, would you ?" added Stubbins, deeply interested.

"Now, how many weeks are there in the year ?" asked Albert, who was as ignorant of figures as any Bear.

"Thirty-seven," said Lord Rushington quickly.

"Thirty-seven," repeated Albert heavily. "And we must have a tax for all those. We will count out all we have got, and—and—divide them by the weeks, and *if* we've got enough we will go home. And while we do this, will you *take stock*, Syrup ? That is always done, and then we have to see the shop-man about our stocking the shop at the beginning ; that is *always* done."

Golden Syrup jumped up on to the counter and disappeared behind among the bags and boxes.

"Now," began Albert, "we'll count the money and divide it by the taxes and then by thirty-seven because of the weeks in the year, and then we shall see—shall see—er—what we shall see."

They all set to work arranging the money in little piles and putting the piles in sizes.

"Now," said Albert when they had this all done, "take your pencil, Stubby, you've been to school, here's a piece of paper, and do the sum. Just how much are the taxes to be paid for all the thirty-seven weeks in the year ?"

Stubbins went away into the corner of the room and lay down on his front with the paper and pencil before him.

He was most anxious to do his school credit; in imagination he often wore the glorious pointed cap which had been his for so short a time. After all, he thought, none of the others had been to a proper boys' school. Stubbins licked his pencil hard, spread out his elbows and put his furry nose very close to the paper, breathing hard. This should be a very, very good sum, he thought; it should have all the numbers he knew in it. After all, he knew six of them; they should *all* be used. He breathed very loudly and wrote very slowly:

Weex in the yer	1 2 ℰ ƽ 5 6
Taxis	6 5 ℰ 4 ℚ ð
Ad up wen you see a line	———
	1 2 3 4 ƽ ð.

He held his head back and looked triumphantly at this beautiful sum, then trotted across to Albert with it, smiling all over his face. Albert took it gravely, put on a pair of spectacles with no glasses in it which had been brought as treasure-trove from the village rubbish-heap, and inspected the sum very closely.

"Just what I make it," he said approvingly.

"You make it what?" asked Stubbins, puzzled.

"Just what you do."

"Oh!"

Albert bent over the piles of money for a long time, lifting them from one place to another, sometimes picking up a coin and inspecting it very closely. Then he swept it all together with his two paws into a heap and jumped up. "We've got the exact amount," he cried to the delighted Bears, "just the exact right, beautiful, shining little amount!"

They hustled the money into a paper bag and pushed it into the pocket of Albert's little coat.

"Have you finished taking the stock, Syrup?" Albert shouted.

"Almost," answered Syrup in a muffled voice from behind the counter. "Now I have, quite."

"Bring the sack along then and come to the shop," and Albert and Stubbins set off, Bitty skipping on to Stubbins as he passed.

They reached the shop and climbed up upon two stools, Syrup standing below them with the sack on his back.

The little bent shop-man with the twinkling, bright blue eyes bent towards them.

"And what can I do for you gentlemen?" he asked, passing his hand over his mouth to hide his smile at the comical little figures before him.

'*Gentlemen*,' thought Stubbins happily. 'First real boy, then gentleman; how proud!'

"We've come to bring you back your stock," said Albert, looking earnestly at it. "We stocked here, you know, and now we have brought it back because we are shutting up our shop. Syrup, open the sack."

Golden Syrup, looking rather surprised, laid the sack upon the floor and opened it; it was empty.

"*Syrup!*" exclaimed Albert in a voice of thunder.

"What?" Syrup looked thoroughly startled. "What's the matter, Albert? You *told* me to."

"Told you to what?" Albert's voice was still most severe.

"Take stock. You chose me, and I—I—took it."

"Where did you put it?"

Golden Syrup's paw stole towards his fat little front. "Don't look at me in that furious kind of way," he burst out, "as if I was *greedy*! Bitty said what we did before was

stocking a shop, and you said *take* stock. I had to put it somewhere."

At this the little shop-man began to laugh till the tears poured down his cheeks. He slapped the counter with the palm of his hand and laughed more and more. "Taking stock indeed; that's a good one," he panted out. "Taking stock indeed; the missus will laugh when I tell her."

The three Bears began to laugh uproariously, they did not quite know at what, but they felt very much better after it. Then Albert dragged his little paper bag out of his pocket and dumped it on the counter. "Allow me to repay you," he said politely.

But the little shopkeeper collected the money and put it back in the bag. "You keep it, young Master," he said. "You've given me a lot of fun, a lot of fun. What you stocked your shop with wouldn't cost me more than about sixpence—you're welcome. Come back and see me when you are here again; come and stock your little shop, and you," pointing to Golden Syrup, "you can come and take stock with me one of these days." Syrup smiled and licked his lips, though he was feeling slightly sick.

The three Bears made their way back to the shop, laughing and chattering. They all began to pack and repack, to arrange and rearrange, to load up Albert—and this time Stubbins and Lord Rushington had little bags to carry too. Bitty's little room was taken to pieces and Bitty himself was settled on to Albert's shoulder.

No one noticed that Velvet and Pekoe were standing very close to each other; Pekoe's little hand gripped those lovely trousers; both Bears' faces were very solemn. But when the laughing, jostling party had assembled at the front door, Velvet Trousers pulled himself together and called out,

"Well, good-bye, Bears; we've had a lovely time with you; perhaps we'll meet again one day."

Albert looked over his shoulder at them, startled. Suddenly the truth dawned upon the Bears. Poor Velvet, oh, poor little Pekoe; they thought they were being left behind; they thought they did not belong to the family! Down went all the parcels, out came all the furry paws: bumbling up against them, as Bears do, patting them, laughing at them, the air filled with their cries of, "Leave you behind? Why, of *course* we aren't going to! Of *course* you're coming with us. Sandy will *love* to have you! Why, we've been longing to give you to him. Come along; start, start—it's time to go home!"

And, bursting into their song of "Bears, Bears, glorious Bears," sweeping Velvet Trousers along with them, Pekoe riding triumphantly with Bitty, laughing, shouting, and all talking at once, the whole Bear troop started on their journey home . . .

Bang went the iron gate; their own front door was just before their noses. The little string ladder hung down from the bell, so that a Bear might climb up the slippery surface to ring it. What was this? A fine piece of paper hung at the end of the ladder and in large red ink letters the words, "Welcome Home—Glorious Bears" was read out in Bitty's clear little voice. The front door opened; the Bears fell in upon the mat.

Then, if you had been standing in the hall, you would have been almost knocked off your feet by the rush of furry little bodies; you would have seen Pekoe slip and fall, but catch at Albert's ankle fur and go bumping wildly up the stairs behind him; you would have heard confused shouts, wild bursts of laughter and snatches of excited words—"*Masses* of money . . . all those high taxes . . . a most

darling little Bear . . . such a wonderful high, high cap . . . real velvet they are . . . not greedy . . . not showing off any more . . . the most *beastly* boy . . . masses of money and all, all for you . . ."

You might have heard the nursery door at the top of the high stairs flung open; you might have heard all the thumping little footsteps and excited cries drowned in one loud shriek of joy; you might have heard the nursery door shut again with a bang which shook the house.

Then, if you had been standing there alone, the house would have seemed very, very still.

BITTY AND THE BEARS ★ ELIZABETH GORELL

J. M.