

Stubbington Manor

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By Elizabeth Gorrel

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STUBBINGTON MANOR

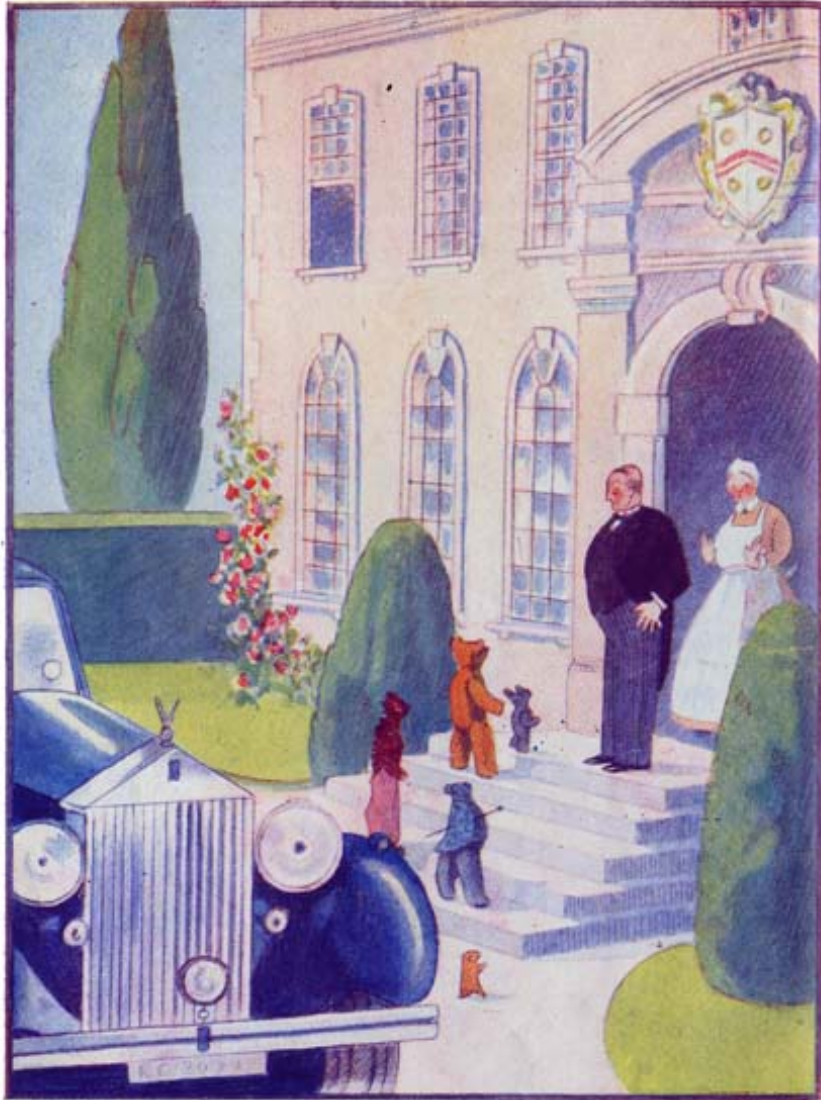


THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED
IN COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH
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STUBBINGTON MANOR

By
ELIZABETH GORELL

With Illustrations by
DOROTHY BURROUGHS

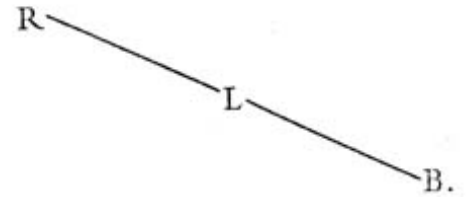


"Crums!" muttered the dumb-founded Butler.
(see p. 29)

★

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

First Edition 1943



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

PEOPLE IN THIS BOOK

- 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 grade*, too big for his boots and shows off a bit).
- GOLDEN SYRUP (a very greedy Bear : his thoughts are always on food).
- ORANGE PEKOE (a tiny young Bear).
- STUBBINS (very anxious to do right, but terribly stupid and slow).
- VELVET TROUSERS (a Bear in velvet trousers).
- COMPANION (an old Bear, very badly treated).
- MUSICAL (an even older Bear, who plays a little tune).

And a few Other People.

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STUBBINGTON MANOR

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STUBBINS was making his bed: at least, he was supposed to be making his bed, but he was not thinking about what he was doing. He pulled his blanket far down over the foot and tucked it in hard: this brought the top of the blanket to about half-way up the bed, so he wandered round to the pillow end and jerked the blanket up and over the pillow and tucked it in so far that the other end of it again only reached to the middle of the bed. This he did several times, and then he pulled it together into a little soft mound, climbed up and sat down on it, sunk in thought. He was trying to think clearly and cleverly as he thought he ought to think; but only pictures and remembrances drifted across his mind, some of them exciting and some which made him feel rather bothered.

Among the exciting things which came into his mind was the fact that somebody had written a book about him and the other Bears and about Bitty, dear, tiny little Bitty, the love and the torment of their lives, though he was only three inches high. The book was called "Bitty and the Bears"—the Bears thought it should have been called "The Bears and Bitty": Bitty did not. Some one else had drawn a lot of pictures for the book and these hung just in front of him, low on the wall for little Bears to see. He smiled at the one of Albert, their good and dignified leader, slipping on the soap and crashing with the rest of them into the water. He shuddered at

the horrible faces of their never-to-be-forgotten enemies wickedly peering down into Bitty's little room. Quite a lump came into his throat as he looked at the one of himself being carried away by a cruel hand, him fastened up in a little cage with large tears rolling down his face. This was a moment Stubbins never liked to think about, and he turned his head away from the row of pictures and tried to go on with his serious think.

Where had he got to? The Book. Yes, some one had read this Book, Mrs. Markes her name was. She lived in a house called Stubbington Manor and she had died. But before she died—at least Stubbins thought it must have been before she died, he was not very clear this morning—she had written a letter saying that this house was to be given to Stubbins with quite a lot of money. Bitty had read the letter to the assembled Bears, who had shrieked with excitement and jumped about, bumping round Stubbins with shouted advice as to what to spend his money on, advice in which the word 'honey' was heard again and again.

While they were all laughing and talking and jostling each other, Stubbins murmured something about having forgotten to make his bed and slipped off by himself to think this important matter over. But the more he thought, the less he seemed to get out of his thoughts, and he had just determined to give up thinking when the door burst open and in rushed the Bears.

"D'you know they've sent you some money to go on with," bawled Lord Rushington as loudly as if Stubbins was stone-deaf. "Quite a bag full."

The Bears were quite incapable of envying each other; and Stubbins's good luck was the good luck of them all.

Stubbins began to brighten up as the money was tumbled out on to the bed with cries of

"Glorious Bears,
Glorious Bears,
Plenty of money
Means plenty of honey!"

and he scrambled off the bed and began to shout, "Let's go out and spend!"

"Yes, yes! Let's go out and spend like wild fire!"

"Or like very rich men!" shouted Lord Rushington.

"Let's go to a big food shop and gorge!" screamed Golden Syrup, quite beside himself. "Buns, treacle, cream, cream, honey—er—treacle—er—honey, cream!" Golden Syrup's few ideas came to an end.

"What about a few decent clothes?" screamed Lord Rushington even louder than before.

At this point Albert's deep rumbling voice was heard above the noise and the Bears quietened down to hear what he would say. "Bears," he said slowly, "you are being wild and silly." The Bears looked rather abashed. "Stubbins will only be muddled up if you scream at him like lunatics. Listen to me. The letter says he must go to Stubbington Manor, where he will find there is a nice cook." (The Bears looked at each other and licked their lips, but in silence this time.) "And a housemaid and a butler."

"What's a butler?" asked Siepie.

"It's a—er—a—a kind of thing you have in that kind of house," said Albert vaguely: he had no idea himself, but was not going to say so and meant to ask Bitty at the first private chance he got.

"They have all had some money left to them on con-

dition they stay on with the new owner—that's you, Stub—for five years if he 'wants them to."

"That's a long, long time; he'll be dead by then," said the voice of little Orange Pekoe very sadly.

"Oh, poor, poor Stubbins; he'll be dead," shouted the Bears, throwing themselves on Stubbins, who began to cry.

"Stop it, you sillies!" Albert pushed them all off Stubbins rather roughly, so that they fell on the floor; he was beginning to get impatient with them. "Why should Stubbins be dead? Don't be idiotic! Now, will you listen to me? We are all alone here and we can quite well go to this place to-morrow and see what it's like and whether we want to stay there for a bit. We don't know if it is lovely or horrible and we will have to go and find out. Now, all of you pack what you want to take: Stubbins and I are going out shopping. When Bitty comes home, you tell him."

Albert refused all their implorings to go shopping too, and elbowed them out of the way, dragging Stubbins after him, leaving the Bears running aimlessly about picking up things and putting them in a little pile and then taking things off that pile to put in another place. They were still half-frantic with excitement, and it always took them some time to calm down.

Albert and Stubbins, hand in hand, went across the Square and up the street.

"Woolworth's?" asked Stubbins.

"Certainly not," shouted Albert above the noise of traffic, but as simply as he could manage, for his chest was swelling with pride and he did not want to show off. "The Army and Navy Stores!"



He was trying to think clearly and cleverly.

(see p. 9)



There they sat, their fur blowing in the wind, their faces wreathed in smiles.

(see p. 12)

'The Army and Navy snores?' thought Stubbins. "All of them?" he asked vaguely. "Do they?" "Do they what?" asked Albert, puzzled. "Snore?"

Albert sighed and walked on. "We are going to a nice, big, rich shop, Stubbins," he said presently.

Stubbins thought Albert jumped about a lot in his conversation, but he knew he was excited and probably that was why. He walked on happily.

"Here, taxi!"

Stubbins started; so did the driver of a passing cab, who stared round on hearing the cry but, not noticing the two small figures on the pavement, drove on.

"Bother him!" muttered Albert crossly. "Hi! Taxi!" he shouted to another one passing by, but the same thing happened.

"We must run for it, Stub," he said. "Don't let go my paw." And when the next taxi drew near Albert swooped forward, climbed upon the running-board, up the side, and in at the open window.

The two Bears sat with some difficulty on the slippery leather seat. They were so low down that no one could see them and admire them in their glory, which was a pity, and, after looking about discontentedly for a minute, Albert, who was rather beyond his usually sober self, seized Stubbins again and, clambering out of the window, scrambled up on to the roof. There they sat, their fur blowing in the wind, their faces wreathed in smiles, waving their paws to any one who saw them and stopped to stare after them.

"This fellow is not going to the Army and Navy Stores," Albert said suddenly.

"How does he know we want to go there?" asked Stubbins.

"He soon will!" said Albert, and, leaning dangerously over the front till his face was close to the driver's ear, he shouted, "The Army and Navy Stores!"

The taxi lurched violently, ran up over the pavement, nearly hit a lamp-post, and came back with a jerk on to the road. The driver sprang out, his face scarlet with rage. "Who d'you think you are, getting into my cab and shouting at me like that?" he exclaimed furiously. "I won't have it! You just pay me and get out—we might have had an accident!"

He flung the door of the cab open. No one was to be seen inside. Up on the roof, the two Bears crouched down as low as they could and kept as still as they could: they were rather frightened.

"Well, I'm blown!" exclaimed the driver slowly. He stared for some minutes in a bewildered way into the empty cab, repeating, "Well, I'm blown!" Then he got back to his seat very hurriedly and drove away.

Albert put his paw to his lip, crept down the side of the cab, followed by Stubbins, threw a piece of silver money in at the open window, and dropped down into the road when there was an empty space in the traffic: the two little figures scurried in safety on to the pavement.

Albert marched up to a telegraph boy who was balancing his bicycle against the edge of the pavement. "Where's the Army and Navy Stores?" he asked him.

"Just behind you," answered the boy mechanically. "Why—why, what on earth—! Here, let me stroke the little 'un! Why, what a little dear! Where does it come from?"

"You attend to your own business, my boy," replied Albert in a voice so grand that it might have been Lord Rushington speaking, and, turning his back on the astonished little messenger, he led Stubbins to the big glass doors behind him, waited till a lady pushed them open, and dashed in between her feet. They nearly tripped her up, but they were inside. Shopping had begun.

CHAPTER II

SHOPPING

FOR a little while the two Bears wandered about the Stores in between people's feet, stopping to examine any goods which might be standing on the floor. They looked at large china bowls and umbrella-stands, they passed by glass vases holding candles, they found themselves accidentally in the lift and were very much astonished when the ground rose suddenly under them.

"An earthquake," thought Stubbins, holding tight to Albert.

Albert, noticing that every one remained quite cool and matter of fact, did the same, and the two Bears surged out among the people at the first stop of the lift.

Presently a glass case containing cards of buttons caught their eyes and they hurried towards it. Glorious rows of buttons, red and green, gold and silver, blue and mother-o'-pearl—the Bears were entranced. Albert climbed up the leg of a chair which stood at the nearest counter and Stubbins followed him. The two stood side by side upon it; only the top of Albert's head just showed above the counter, Stubbins could not be seen at all. No one noticed them and they stood there for some little time, Albert clutching his precious bag of money. The conversation of the shop-assistants went on above their heads.

"I told him, I told him straight, I said to him you can't take out a girl of my sort if you aren't prepared to spend a bit of money," said one, polishing her nails.

"Ha! I bet that caught him," remarked her friend, arranging her curls with an invisible hair-pin.

Albert, tired of standing out of sight, climbed on to the counter. The girl gasped, stared, and took a step backwards, clutching at her friend. Stubbins came clambering after Albert and, leaning over a cardboard box which loomed up in front of him, he said in a shy, gruff little voice, "I want to buy a little gold button and a small piece of flannel."

"What's the flannel for, Stub?" asked Albert interestedly.

"I thought I would keep it very clean," said Stubbins timidly.

"What are you going to pay for it with?" asked the girl, laughing.

Albert put his paw into the bag he carried and brought out a pound note; he spread it on the counter and put his foot on it for safety. "Bring out your buttons," he said briefly.

Rather startled, the girl produced a drawer, another, and yet another, and laid them on the counter.

The two Bears leant over the drawers with sparkling, almost awestruck, eyes. Such a lot of buttons! So many sizes, shapes, and colours, and of every size from darling tiny little sparkling ones, like diamonds, to enormous ones of sombre browns or brilliant jet.

Stubbins put a hesitating paw on one shaped like a small gold daisy, looking at Albert out of the corner of his eye. "Could we have this one?" he asked him.

"You can have much more than one, Stubbins."

"Can I have a lot? Can I have two?"

"You can get as many as you want," answered Albert.

"You can get any you want for yourself and for all the others if you want to give them a present."

"And for you, Albert?"

"Well," said Albert a little self-consciously, eyeing a large, dark-blue button with a silver rim very longingly, "of course if you really *want* to——"

"I do, I do!" cried Stubbins eagerly, nearly overbalancing into the drawers in his excitement. "Have this one—and have this one and this and this——!"

Albert had to calm him down, and together they arranged six little piles. Albert had his dark-blue and silver ones and a large smoke pearl one which looked very mysterious to him: Stubbins chose the little gold daisies and some which looked like marbles, all colours of the rainbow. For Sleepie they found a set of white ones with blue and black centres, "To remind him to keep his eyes open," said Stubbins happily. Golden Syrup's pile was like barley-sugar, round, clear and golden. Orange Pekoe had some tiny red, white and blue balls: Lord Rushington's were large, sparkling paste buttons which winked and glittered.

Albert bought a shopping-bag, and the buttons were poured into it, the money paid to the girl, who had not yet recovered from her astonishment and served them as though in a daze, the bag was thrown over Albert's shoulder and they marched away, followed by a small, staring crowd. They paused at the ribbon counter and matched their buttons in narrow ribbons to wear round their waists.

"Stubbins," exclaimed Albert suddenly, "we have forgotten Bitty!"

Stubbins sat down suddenly in his consternation. "Oh,

poor, *poor* little Bitty!" he said sorrowfully. "How horrible of us! What will he do?"

Albert pulled him to his feet. "Come on, come on," he said: "everybody's staring at you." He hustled Stubbins along, and through the next door-way they found themselves in the toy department.

About a quarter of an hour later the two Bears came down in the lift smiling from ear to ear: behind them came a man carrying several large parcels. They stopped in the grocery department and added several pots of honey, they stopped at the sweet counter and ordered several boxes of sweets, and then, stepping grandly in to the taxi which the man called for them, the parcels piled at their feet, they climbed with great dignity on to the seat. People were standing round to see them go; they could not ride deliciously on the roof. The taxi sprang forward and Stubbins shot off the seat on to the floor on his back. They were off home.

When they reached the front door of the house in Kensington Square where they lived, Stubbins tumbled out of the taxi, climbed the small string ladder which had been hung to allow a Bear to reach the door-bell, pressed the bell with all his might, and then, with an ease born of long practice, swung himself from it sideways on to the handle of the door, from which he could reach the letter-box. Pushing this open, he put his face as far through as he could get it and began bawling at the top of his voice, "Bears, Bears! Heaps of taxis to tie round our waist, a parcel, a button, honey——!" Stubbins was getting very involved and began to realize it, for he said in a slow, questioning voice,

"A taxi to tie round our waist?" Then very loudly through the letter-box, "No! I don't mean that: we drove in the taxi, the other thing was to tie round our waist——"

Here the bumping, furry noises which he had been hearing for some time got louder and the front door swung open. Stubbins over-balanced and fell down on to the Bears who were crowding in the doorway.

Albert was gravely supervising the taxi-man who, with a broad grin on his face, was carrying large, exciting-looking parcels from the gate. These he put down on the hall floor, the Bears drawing back and eyeing him a little nervously. But he seemed quite harmless and even kind as he put down the last parcel and with a parting grin and a "Good afternoon, gentlemen" he departed.

"Gentlemen," said the Bears, smiling at each other in a happy daze; and then they fell to work on the parcels, scratching and scrabbling off the string and paper. Cries of joy greeted the lovely buttons which were held up to the light, sorted, examined, and re-sorted by the Bears sitting in a circle on the floor, the buttons in a little bright-coloured pile between them.

"This means a lot of sewing," said Albert a little heavily.

"And miles and miles of cotton," added Stubbins's anxious voice.

The jars of sweets and honey were exclaimed over but, for the moment, resisted, and the Bears went to the bottom of the stairs and shouted for Bitty.

Since Sandy, the little boy who was the Master of the Bears, had gone away across the wide sea, the Bears had become less dependent on him and more dependent on

each other—but Bitty was one alone. The tiny boy pined in his heart and, though the Bears adored him and in a dim way looked up to him, they felt he was not quite as they were; and Bitty would sit on his match-box bed in silence and solitude sometimes, his heart filled with the blank thought, 'nothing to do.'

At the top of the house, outside the nursery door, another little string ladder hung from the banisters. Up this Bitty climbed, hearing the shouts below, and down he slid, round and round, skilfully keeping himself in the middle of the shining, slippery handrail, till he was brought up at the end by the large wooden ball which ended it. From this he slipped down the banister and stood among them.

Albert picked him solemnly up and put him on Stubbins's shoulder.

"Tell him what you bought for him, Stub," he said.

Stubbins twisted his happy face round so that he could see the tiny figure perched on his shoulder so lightly, and the two smiled at each other.

"Bitty, Bitty, we've got you the most lovely—such an excitement, oh, Bitty, look! I'll *show* you!"

Down beside the large, unpacked parcel plopped Stubbins, Bitty holding to his shoulder-fur; the Bears, crowding round, breathing heavily, lifted away the sheet of brown paper they had spread out to prolong the delicious surprise, and there, bright, shining and business-like, stood a model railway.

Bitty was entranced—he walked about among the carriages, climbed into the engine, and examined the rails. Under his instructions, eagerly though a little clumsily, the Bears fitted the rails together, stood the engine on

the line and hooked the carriages and trucks behind it. Albert, struggling, wound it up while the other Bears combined to hold it still, and Bitty climbed aboard. Orange Pekoe could squeeze into the carriage behind him, Sleepie was just small enough to lie in a truck, his four paws sticking upwards, his fat little body tightly wedged.

The rails ran all down the hall to where two steps led downwards to a lower part of the hall. The rails reached just as far as the top of these two steps—to prevent the train falling down them Albert had pushed a wooden box across the line.

"Are you ready?" he shouted in an excited voice. "Shall I start you?"

"Ready!" shrilled out Bitty.

Albert let go and stepped back. "Hi! Stubbins, get back! What are you doing?" he screamed down the hall.

Stubbins, at the other end of the line, had just noticed the wooden box and was pushing with all his might to get it off the rails.

'A great thing like that might mean a bad accident,' the little Bear thought, as with a gigantic effort he pushed it off the line. 'Here comes the lovely train: I was only just in time.'

The train buzzed along the rails at a fine pace, and, there being nothing to stop it, crashed down the steps and lay on its side, the wheels still whirring round and round. The shouting Bears ran along the line to see what damage had been done.

'Mercy, what a smash!' thought Stubbins, looking down on it from the top of the steps. 'Well, no one

seems to be hurt; but it was a most dangerous happening.' Quite unaware that the Bears were all glaring at him, he pushed the box slowly back across the line. 'That ought to stop the train if they try to do it again,' he thought.

But they did not try to do it again. They were tired with their excitement and, pushing all their new treasures together into a corner of the hall, they lumbered upstairs.

They had hardly reached their nursery when 'Ping-ping—Ping-ping'—the telephone began to ring. It was the lawyer who had sent them the exciting letter about Stubbins's inheritance and the even more exciting money to spend. Albert had had much talk with the quick-witted Bitty as to just what he should say should that gentleman ring up. Bitty thought it very possible that the lawyer did not know that his new clients were Bears and he was perfectly right. He also thought that the longer he remained ignorant of this the easier it would be for the Bears to settle into their new home. So Bitty was on Albert's shoulder when the telephone did at last announce to them that Mr. Alexander, the lawyer, wished to speak to Mr. Stubbins.

"Mr. Stubbins is very tired and he is resting: will you please give me a message for him?"

"I was wondering how soon he would like to go down to Stubbington Manor," said the voice at the other end. "I am in correspondence with Mrs. Bathe, the cook, and, if Mr. Stubbins wishes, I will let her know what day to expect him."

"Mr. Stubbins is, at present, living with friends," said Albert slowly. "Can you tell me how big the house is?"

"I believe it has ten bedrooms, not counting the maids' quarters."

Albert looked very startled: he put his paw over the telephone and whispered to Bitty, "The maids are in quarters."

Bitty stifled a laugh and signed to him to go on with the conversation.

"Mr. Stubbins would wish to take his friends with him," Albert said. "Their names are——" (here he consulted the list he and Bitty had prepared):

"Mr. Albert Bair.

Lord Rushington.

Mr. S. Leepie.

Mr. V. T. Rousers.

Mr. O. Pekoe &

Mr. G. S. Y. Rup."

"Quite a party," said Mr. Alexander. "There will be a stir in that quiet neighbourhood. May I ask the approximate age of my client?"

"Yes," said Albert solemnly.

The voice at the other end sounded a little taken aback.

"Er—quite—er—a young man, I presume?"

"Yes," said Albert again, "you do—I mean, he is."

"Well," said the voice of Mr. Alexander, "I will make all necessary arrangements at the other end and everything will be in readiness for Mr. Stubbins's reception. Mrs. Markes had great confidence in her domestic staff and I am sure they will do their best to look after his interests. I believe they are much attached to the place. What day would you like to go down? Thursday? Very well. Would you like the car sent from the Manor to fetch you? Yes? Well, I will tell them that and please be

sure to let me know if there is anything further we can tell you. Perhaps Mr. Stubbins will be calling here one day."

"Perhaps he will," said Albert. "Good-bye, and thank you very much," and he put back the receiver, yawned twice widely, and lay down to sleep, very much exhausted.

CHAPTER III

SEVEN YOUNG GENTLEMEN

THE sun was shining brightly into the kitchen of Stubbington Manor. Breakfast was over and the post had come. Burnett, the Butler, had a letter from Mr. Alexander, and he had just read it to Mrs. Bathe, the cook, a round, rosy woman who had taken it from him and was re-reading it out loud. Edith, the housemaid, was listening with pursed lips.

"Seven young gentlemen," she said. "Not quite what we've been used to: nice for my carpets too, I expect."

Burnett too looked grave and even a little anxious. "It seems James is to take the car up on Thursday in time to drive the gentlemen back here for tea—a bit of a squash; he had best take the Rolls, and even then it will be a close fit, I should say."

"He must be a friendly one," observed Mrs. Bathe, "living with six friends: it's the war, I shouldn't wonder. Poor, bombed-out souls, I shouldn't be surprised, and he has taken them in."

"Well," said Edith, "Thursday is Thursday, and not very far away; I must be airing my linen. I suppose Mr. Stubbins will have the Queen's Room and the other gentlemen must just sort themselves. A nice state my drawing-room is likely to be in with seven smoking and trampling all over it."

"You have a good fire burning in the library: that's where you'll find the gentlemen will be. They won't use the drawing-room till there is a lady along, you'll see."

"Ah," said Burnett gravely, "it won't be long before there's some ladies about here with seven gentlemen in the house. We shall see what we shall see. And meanwhile I must get out my silver and I expect I had better decant some port; that will not come amiss with any of the seven, I should imagine."

Thursday morning came, a lovely, sunshiny day. Stubbington Manor looked its best. The great magnolia which covered its front was in full flower, the garden looked lovely, every path was weeded and every flower-bed neat. Inside the house, there were flowers everywhere, a wood fire burned in the oak-panelled hall and one in the library arranged by Edith to look as inviting as possible. She had put out many ash-trays and removed the lovely Persian mat to the end of the room farthest from the fireplace.

'As likely as not they will stand by the fire, trampling my rugs with their great muddy boots,' she thought.

The Queen's Room, with its huge oak bed with four posts, another of those in which Queen Elizabeth had spent the night on one of her many journeys, was beautifully prepared for Mr. Stubbins—not a crease on the coverlet with its dim-hued silks, its monograms and patterns. Edith moved about arranging things, now and then shaking her head and murmuring "Seven gentlemen!"

A bathroom led out of the Queen's Room and in it was a sunken bath with three steps leading down to it. Edith hung a huge, fluffy bath-towel upon the heated rail; she placed a large jar of bath salts on a glass shelf close by, gave a last look round and slowly returned to the kitchen, still shaking her head and murmuring, "*Seven gentlemen.*"

Mrs. Bathe was warm and flustered. For several days she had been preparing what she thought the gentlemen would most like to eat—cakes full of plums, delicious rolls, cheese straws, and many other delicacies crowded the larder shelves, ready to tempt the new owner of the house.

'Lord Rushington anyhow will know what's what,' she thought as she spread out a row of juicy peaches. Privately she thought 'Stubbins' a common name, and when Lord Rushington's was seen on the list her mind had been decidedly relieved.

And now the house was quite ready: everything was in apple-pie order, everything likely to please the gentlemen had been, as far as possible, provided for, and the hour had come. Burnett took up his post upon the wide front-door steps, Mrs. Bathe watched from the hall window, Edith hovered on the low oak staircase. Suddenly there was a stir, the Butler turned round and signed excitedly to Mrs. Bathe, who signed excitedly to Edith: the green Rolls was seen making its majestic progress up the long drive; it swept in a stately manner up to the front door and stopped.

James, the chauffeur, did not at once spring to open the door as they were accustomed to see him do when old Mrs. Markes was in his car. Indeed, looking to see why he did not, Burnett thought instantly he must be ill: the chauffeur sat as if he was stuffed, his face scarlet, staring straight before him. Then with a jerk he moved, got slowly out and, going round to the door of the car, he opened it and stood aside, holding it.

'The car is empty,' thought Burnett, peering forward.

'They haven't come,' thought Mrs. Bathe, peeping through the window.

"What's up, James?" called Burnett, taking a step forward.

James, his face still scarlet, stood stiffly at the door of the car and did not move.

Suddenly there was a stir and before the astonished eyes of Burnett and Mrs. Bathe a small, a very small, figure descended in a bumbling jump and stood upon the steps below—a little brownish-grey Koala Bear, standing erect, looking curiously up at the house and the astounded Burnett.

Another movement and a larger ginger-coloured Bear, 'more like a big Teddy,' thought Burnett, who was rooted to the spot and whose mouth and eyes were now open to their fullest extent. This Bear reached the side of the smaller one and together they bounced up the low steps and stood at the Butler's feet. The larger Bear spoke in a deep, rather loud voice, "This is Mr. Stubbins," he said.

The Butler blinked, swallowed hard, shut his eyes a moment and then looked again: they were still there—not only that, but other Bears were descending from the car, a lanky one of a much darker colour than the other two, wearing a fine pair of plum-coloured, velvet trousers, and one more like the first one, only he stuck out more in front and held his head very far back and wore a coat covered with buttons of all sorts and sizes. "Crumbs!" muttered the dumbfounded Butler.

Stubbins, on being thus introduced, bowed very low and, turning to Albert, said very simply, "This is Albert."

"Mister Bair!" hissed Albert in his ear.

"Oh, Albert, have you?" exclaimed Stubbins in distress. "Oh, Albert, which one?"

"What *are* you talking about, Stubbins?" asked Albert quite angrily. "You aren't talking sense."

"I thought you said you had missed a Bear," said Stubbins humbly.

Albert sighed heavily; he was tired with the excitement of the journey and all the anxiety of remembering everything Bitty had advised him to do and how to make a good impression. But he pulled himself together and as each Bear bounced in their own peculiar way up the steps he introduced them to the butler, who still seemed thunder-struck. "Mr. V. T. Rousers." Velvet Trousers bowed. "Mr. S. Leepie." Sleepie opened his eyes wider than usual and gave a friendly, sleepy little smile.

"Lord Rushington." Here the Butler bowed; Lord Rushington passed him grandly, only raising a paw in acknowledgment. "Mr. G. S. Y. Rup," went on Albert ceremoniously: the fat Bear smiled broadly and licked his lips to which clung a few remnants of the stick of barley-sugar which he had been sucking under the pretence that he felt sick in a car.

"Has Mr. Pekoe not accompanied you, sir?" Burnett asked Albert. The Bears were so stately and so much on their best behaviour that it began to seem not quite so staggering to hear them speak.

"Oh, he's with Bitty. Will some one carry Bitty's room up these stairs, please?"

The Butler's jaw dropped again: here was a new puzzle, carrying a room upstairs—and what on earth was Bitty?

"That glass box on the seat of the car," explained Albert. "Be *very* careful of it."

Burnett signed to James, who brought carefully out of the car a glass box about a foot square and carried it up

the steps into the hall, followed by all the Bears, and there he set it on a table in the window. The Bears were introduced to Mrs. Bathe and Edith, to whom they bowed gravely, and then, "This is Bitty and Mr. Pekoc," said Stubbins, gazing affectionately into the glass box.

"The little dears: they've brought some toys," said Mrs. Bathe, and she drew near the box and looked in. Two dolls'-house arm-chairs were set side by side in the middle of the box and on them sat two motionless and tiny figures.

"Why, I declare!" said Edith, coming to peep over Mrs. Bathe's shoulder. "What a beautifully made little figure, and a tiny orange Teddy Bear—just look at those little hands and feet—oh! Lawks! Oh, look! Look! It's moving!" for Bitty had suddenly pressed his hand over his mouth to keep in his bursting laughter.

Albert put his paws carefully each side of the glass case and lifted it off. "This," he said with immense pride, "is our Bitty, and this is Orange—er—Mr. Pekoe."

Bitty walked up Albert's arm and established himself on his shoulder; Velvet Trousers took up Orange Pekoe.

"Shall I show you your rooms, sir, or would you care for tea first?" asked Mrs. Bathe, while Burnett went down the steps to superintend the unloading of the car of the many strange packages with which it was crammed.

"Tea first," exclaimed Golden Syrup, pushing the last piece of his barley-sugar into his mouth.

"Syrup, Stubbins is Master of the House, not you," said Bitty's clear little voice.

His speaking at all caused such a stir and flutter that Golden Syrup's muttered, "Well, I suppose we must eat even if he is the Master of the House," was not noticed.

"Will you have tea or see the house, Stub?" asked Albert.

"Oh," said Stubbins, turning pink, "shall we have tea first?"

The chairs, which had been set round the long, narrow oak table which stood in the wide bay window, were used by the Bears only as places from which to climb on to the table, where they sat in a decorous ring round the food. Albert pointed out a badly tied parcel, which, when Edith, moving as if in a trance, unwrapped it, was found to contain some dolls' cups and saucers and some even smaller dolls'-house ones, none of them very clean. Tea was poured into these and one set before each Bear. Albert said they would like to be left alone to have their tea, adding at Bitty's whispered suggestion that they would ring when they had finished. Burnett showed them the electric bell-push on the table, and he, Mrs. Bathe and Edith left the room; but they had not reached the kitchen, walking in silence and amazement, before a loud peal on the bell stopped them.

"One of them has sat on the bell, as like as not," said Mrs. Bathe.

Burnett turned on his heel and solemnly paced down the passage again and back into the hall.

The Bears sat demurely in their places: every plate was empty.



"I want to buy a little gold button and a small piece of flannel."

(see p. 17)

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

STUBBINS stood nervously on the mat before the big fire-place in the hall, gazing up into the Butler's face: he looked a very pink little Bear and was feeling terribly shy.

Albert had announced that it was the proper thing for Stubbins to inspect his new house and he thought it best that he should do so without the other Bears. 'For,' thought Albert to himself, 'if he says anything very Stubbins-ish they are sure to laugh and call him silly and he has got to be the Master of the House. Perhaps if he is alone with that man they will get on better together.'

So the Butler stood, a round, not to say, fat man, gazing down at the small Bear. Stubbins eyed him very shyly, feeling some one ought to say something and break the ice; so, as Burnett said nothing, indeed the poor Butler was almost too bewildered to speak, Stubbins ventured a remark. "We're rather the same shape, aren't we?" he said, smiling his friendly smile.

Burnett was taken aback. "Er—the same shape?" he exclaimed. "Er—how do you mean, sir?"

"Both of us rather round in front," said Stubbins, patting his fat little figure; "but you are a good deal prouder, of course."

The Butler received this in silence, remembering that a good deal of money for him depended on his getting on well with this strange and unexpected little creature. So he

"I've been to school!"

(see p. 34)



bent down towards him and said pleasantly, "Would you like to go over the house, sir?"

"Over the house?" repeated Stubbins, rather startled. "What in? An aeroplane?"

"I meant, sir, shall I show you the rooms in this house," explained the Butler. "To go over the house is just a way of speaking."

"And a very funny way of speaking too," answered Stubbins, chuckling. "Yes, please, I would like to see the rooms of the house. You know, I very much like you," he went on, chattering happily as he scrambled up the wide flight of shallow oak stairs by the Butler's side.

Looking down at the funny little figure, the Butler felt surprisingly pleased by this compliment and led the way with more assurance to the Queen's Bed-room.

"This," he said, ushering him in, "is the Queen's Bed-room. We thought you would like to sleep here."

"Will she mind?" asked Stubbins. "Is she fond of Bears? No one told us the Queen would be here: we would all have bowed."

"Er—this Queen lived a long time ago, many hundreds of years," said the Butler.

"Then she is not here now?" asked Stubbins, relaxing a little. "Well, it's a lovely room. Will you lift me on to the bed—oh, it's lovely; it's like a little room, this bed." Stubbins leapt about on the spring mattress, then, wrapping his arms round one of the four bed-posts, he looked into the Butler's face and, smiling proudly, announced, "I've been to school."

"Indeed, sir?" answered the Butler, concealing a smile. "How very interesting: not Eton, sir, I suppose?"

"Oh, goodness, no! They liked me. Besides, I wouldn't be here if they had, would I?"

At this moment Stubbins's attention wandered to the window and he bounced down from the bed and up on to the low window to look out. Below the window was a cherry tree in full flower. Stubbins longed to jump on to one of its branches and explore, but this he rightly felt would not be quite acting as the Master of the House. So he jumped on to the shoulder of the Butler instead, who after his first convulsive start of astonishment took this also rather odd behaviour calmly.

"This room is too grand for us," said Stubbins's shy little voice, very close to his ear. "Is there anything else?"

"Why certainly, sir," Burnett answered. "Come this way."

He shut the door of the Queen's Room and proceeded along the passage, walking in a stately way. He threw open the doors of several bedrooms, all airy and well-furnished, but none of them attracted the Master of the House, who jogged up and down on his shoulder in rather a childish way and shouted out, "Go on! Go on!—next one, please!"

The Butler reached the end of the passage, turned the corner, and climbed another stair-case. "The nursery suite is here," he said.

Stubbins looked eagerly about. "Whose is it?" he asked.

"Well, sir, I suppose it is yours," Burnett told him, adding doubtfully, "in a manner of speaking."

"Can I eat it now?" Stubbins whispered this in his ear. Perhaps he did not hear, for, except for looking even a little more bewildered, he made no answer, and Stubbins

was too shy to repeat his request ; besides, it was put out of his mind as soon as he saw the room they were now entering. It was a big room : on one side the windows came down to the ground and opened on to a wide, flat roof. Long ago some one had made a roof garden there, and there were stone troughs and pots filled with withered plants. Stubbins's eyes began to sparkle : here was a lovely place, and what a beautiful safe garden for Bitty !

Inside the room was a large bouncy sofa, its cover so shabby that a Bear could bounce upon it safely. There was a big bare table, a piano and, joy of joy ! what did he see ? on the top of the piano a large and lovely dolls'-house ! Stubbins stared at it with delight. Here was a treasure indeed ! Indeed, the whole room was full of treasures ; the mantel-piece was covered with pretty little animals made in wood and china. Stubbins dropped from the Butler's shoulder on to the top of the high fire-guard and stared up at them. The Butler, amused at his expression, lifted down one of the ornaments, a little wooden dog with a chain from his collar on which was another smaller dog, and gave it into his paws. Stubbins turned it over and over, delighted, then began to think of other things.

"What's your name ?" he asked the Butler shyly.

"Burnett, sir," he answered.

Stubbins, startled, instantly flung the little wooden dogs into the fire-place.

The Butler looked equally startled. "Why did you do that, sir ?" he asked.

"I thought you said—why you *did* say——?" stammered Stubbins. "You told me to throw it on the fire, but there isn't a fire."

"I never did," said Burnett in rather an indignant voice, stooping over to rescue the little dogs.

"You did ! Oh, you *story*, you did ! I heard you : you said, 'Burn it, sir.'"

"Burnett, sir."

"How can I ? I haven't got any net." Tears were coming into Stubbins's eyes : he was getting tired of being Master of the House with this strange man, and longed for an inconspicuous place among his friends again.

The Butler lifted the woe-begone little figure off the top of the fender and spoke in a very gentle slow voice. "You did not quite understand," he said. "You asked me what my name was and I told you it was Burnett ; that is my name, Burnett."

Stubbins laughed a loud, rather unnatural laugh, the laugh of an overtired Bear. He was not at all sure what it was all about, but this man evidently meant to be kind, and if he had such a funny name it wasn't his fault, and anyhow the dear little dogs had been saved. Here Stubbins yawned and lolled against Burnett's neck, tickling him with his soft fur. Burnett laid a cushion flat on the sofa and Stubbins on the cushion.

"You have forty winks, sir," he said, "and I will fetch the other—ahem—the other young gentlemen."

'Bother,' thought Stubbins ; but he obediently started winking—one, two, three, four, five—Stubbins was asleep.

CHAPTER V

LOVELY FOOD

STUBBINS was woken up, perfectly fresh as a Bear wakes, ten minutes later by the rest of them jostling and laughing in the doorway; behind them loomed Burnett's tall figure and over his shoulder peeped Edith, who could no longer stay away from the strange new little people who had come to live in her precious house. The Bears burst in, all talking together; they rushed to the window to inspect and then with cries of joy they spied the dolls'-house.

Edith lifted it down on to the nursery table: Bitty dashed in at the front door, followed by Orange Pekoe; Golden Syrup made an attempt to get in after them, but stuck fast in the door. Not noticing this, Edith unlatched the hinged fastening and swung the front of the house open. Poor Golden Syrup's feet went up into the air and he hung half in and half out of the door over the edge of the table shrieking for help. Sleepie suddenly roused himself and, coming behind him, gave him a good spank. At this every Bear fell on the top of the next Bear to him and attempted to roll him over, biting at his fur: scrabbling and laughing, they covered the nursery table, while Bitty and Orange Pekoe looked down from the top room of the dolls'-house, grinning at the fun.

Albert was the first to recover himself: this was no behaviour for Mr. Albert Bair! He pulled himself out from under Lord Rushington and Sleepie, who were sitting on him, and passed his paws over his fur, smoothing it down and looking rather sheepish.

"Boys, Boys," he said in his deep voice, "what are you doing?—Ugh!" This was jerked out of him as Sleepie ran between his legs and made him sit down again with a sudden bang. But he had no need to get cross, for the Bears stopped their wild game as suddenly as they had begun it; they noticed that Burnett and Edith were laughing heartily at the romp and they hated to be laughed at. They moved about humming carelessly for a few minutes, and then Lord Rushington suggested they should see the kitchen. So all of them, except Bitty and Orange Pekoe, who refused to leave the dolls'-house where they were busy pushing furniture about and examining every detail, went with Burnett and Edith down the long passages to the kitchen.

Mrs. Bathe was sitting at the table cutting up vegetables. She rose with a rather embarrassed smile when the Bears trooped in, and helped them up on to the table, where they sat down in a solemn row and stared at her. There was a rather awkward pause.

"Er—what sort of food do you like to eat?" asked Mrs. Bathe, breaking it at last.

"Almost any kind," answered Golden Syrup quickly. "And we have big hungriness, as big as this," and Golden Syrup held out two fat arms to show the size of their appetites.

Albert nudged him into silence. "It seems a pity," he said, "for you to make the table so nice when we eat so quickly. Suppose you put what we may eat into a basket and we will take it out when we want it."

Burnett did not think this would do at all. "Some of you may want to take more than the others," he objected (all the eyes of all the Bears turned silently towards Golden

Syrup, who hummed a little tuneless tune and looked as innocent as he could). "Your meals should be put properly on a low table at proper times and you should all sit round like proper gentlemen. We don't want the place turned into a bear-garden."

The Bears looked a little stricken and Stubbins said in a very low voice, "We will be one when we are outside, though, won't we?"

It was decided that Burnett should have the legs of one of the tables and several small chairs cut very short and that dignity should be kept up at meals.

"Could we see the Food?" asked Golden Syrup.

Mrs. Bathe opened the door of a large store-cupboard, almost a small room, and what a glorious sight met their eyes! Yes, there were rows on rows of jars marked 'Golden Syrup,' 'Treacle,' 'Jam' and 'Honey,' bags and bags of sugar, tins and tins of biscuits, sardines, currants, raisins and all sorts of good things.

'If only I could loiter here and be shut in!' thought Golden Syrup. 'Every one would think it was an accident and—oh, boy!—could I have a feast!'

It was not very hard to do; he had only to dodge behind a large tin of flour standing on the floor. No one counted the Bears as they trooped out. Golden Syrup was left in solitary state in the store-cupboard.

He stood for some moments on the floor by the door, his head on one side, listening to the footsteps and chatter in the kitchen, till they died away. The whole party had evidently trooped off to some other part of the house. Then with sparkling eyes he climbed from shelf to shelf to where he had seen tins containing his namesake shining in a row. Fortunately for him, one of these tins had already



Golden Syrup plunged his paw into the golden syrup.

(see p. 41)



Lord Rushington stood stiffly erect in the bath.

(see p. 44)

been opened. Golden Syrup plunged his paw into the golden syrup and drew it out with a long sticky delicious stream slowly dropping from it. Into this stream he thrust his tongue, and for a long time both the inside and the outside of his fat person received plenty. Then, for a change he pushed his sticky paw into a bag of sugar and sat happily licking it off again while his eyes ran greedily along the shelves. A tin marked 'Raisins' attracted his attention and, moving over to it, he opened it and crammed some into his mouth, following on with a pawful of currants, some of which fell on to his treacle-covered front and stuck there like buttons.

Climbing higher—oh, joy!—what a sight met his eyes, three squares of honey in the comb! Honey in the comb is not the easiest way for a Bear to eat it, but Golden Syrup set violently to work, pressing it and even jumping on it, till a sudden hole was made into which he sank nearly up to his knees. With both his paws he broke and gouged pieces off it, cramming them into his mouth and now and then bending over to lick up the stream of thinner honey which ran out below. He was in a fine mess by this time and, besides, he was beginning to have a very queer feeling inside. His paws moved more and more languidly to his mouth and, though he continued to eat, it was more from habit than from inclination. At last it seemed impossible to go on any longer and he slowly climbed down.

"For I must not be greedy," he said heavily to himself, as he reached the floor: it seemed to him to heave up and then down. 'A very stupid thing to keep food in a ship,' he thought in a bewildered way. 'Oh, I do feel sick! I must have had something for tea which disagreed with me, or perhaps it was the drive down. Oh, I do feel sick—oh, oh!'

Albert missed Golden Syrup when they were back in 'the nursery suite' and he was arranging with Edith for a row of cushions to be put on the large old divan sofa there for beds for them all. Albert's brain moved a little slowly, but it was sure, and it did not have to move much before he guessed where Golden Syrup was likely to be found, and they all trooped back to the kitchen. Golden Syrup heard them coming and threw himself on his back, pretending to faint, and indeed he did feel ill enough to faint. He heard the key turn in the lock and Mrs. Bathe's voice saying,

"Poor little thing, he's half-dead with fright. Why, look, he must have been dashing himself against the shelves! Just look what a mess he is in! Never mind, my little dear, you are quite safe now: we'll soon have you shipshape again."

The kind woman picked up the flopping, limp, sticky Syrup and held him in her arms. The Bears drew near anxiously. Albert laid his paw on Syrup's fur and then licked it, he looked at the others and they looked at him in silence. Golden Syrup opened one eye and looked at them, and then shut it quickly and lay limper than ever.

"Now, I tell you what I'll do," broke in Edith suddenly. "I'll take him upstairs and give him a warm bath. Give him to me; I'll wrap him in this cloth and bath him in the nursery."

Golden Syrup went cold all over. The Bears *hated* to be bathed and since Sandy, their Master, had gone away, none of them had taken a bath. He still lay limply, for he didn't know what else to do, and felt himself being carried away upstairs, his friends jostling along behind, laughing in low tones and rather rejoicing over his plight.

Edith laid Golden Syrup, still wrapped in his cloth, on

the floor and bustled away to get a small tin bath which she filled with warm water. She put a handful of Lux into it and whisked it up into a fine lather, knelt down beside it and began to peel the cloth from the sticky Bear.

"Dear, dear, just look at that, now," she said as she placed him in the bath and a scum of honey-comb and currants rose to the surface. "Well, we'll soon have him nice and clean again."

Edith squeezed and rubbed the disgusted Bear, rinsed and squeezed again, finishing off by pouring a jug of clean water over him. She sat down with Golden Syrup wrapped in a fluffy bath-towel and began briskly rubbing him. Syrup was never a fluffy Bear, his fur was more like golden flannel; but he emerged from the towel so bright and yellow that he and the Bears were all startled. Edith looked at him with great satisfaction. Bitty and Orange Pekoe had been sitting on the edge of the nursery table gleefully looking on, and now Bitty's voice was heard unexpectedly.

"Why don't you bath all the Bears?" he asked. "They haven't had one for ages; it would do them good."

"No! No!" shrieked the Bears, drawing backwards. "We won't be bathed: we are never bathed! Bath Bitty: don't bath us!"

Edith looked slowly from one to another. "You aren't sticky," she remarked. "But a good wash all round would do none of you young gentlemen any harm. Come along now."

She re-filled the bath and even poured some warm water into the tiny bath in the dolls'-house and gave the bird's bath from the canary cage to Orange Pekoe. She seized Albert, and the Bears almost held their breath as he nearly

disappeared among the soap-suds. Albert stood it bravely. Certainly his fur looked quite a different colour when she had squeezed the water from it and handed him in a bath-towel to Mrs. Bathe, who had come in to watch. Lord Rushington stood stiffly erect in the bath refusing to bend his knees and sit down, but Edith, now determined to do the job properly, laid him on his back and squeezed and soaped and rubbed him as thoroughly as she had the others. Sleepie gave no trouble, but sat blinking and smiling while his toilet was done. Stubbins slipped and was a few minutes quite out of sight under the soap : as Edith cleared it from his face with clean water he blinked most pitifully at her but made no complaint.

The electric fire was lit and some small nursery chairs were put before it, and on the chairs a row of wonderfully fair and fluffy Bears sat, while Edith and Burnett combed and brushed their fur. Mrs. Bathe brought up a tray with small bowls of treacle posset ' to keep the young gentlemen from catching cold,' she said. By this time, the Bears, greatly relieved that the bath was over, were all uproarious, laughing loudly and chattering, choking over their treacle posset and nudging each other when they tried to drink.

Bitty and Orange Pekoe were tucked into bed, or rather, Bitty used the dolls'-house bed with little squares of flannel tucked round him for blankets, while Orange Pekoe chose to lie on a small pin-cushion from which the pins had been removed and enough bran to make it soft ; this he had at the foot of Bitty's bed. The Bears, now half asleep, were laid in rows on the cushions of the sofa. There they lay, fluffy and delightful, all sleeping curled up and peaceful except Golden Syrup, who lay restlessly on his back with an expression of discomfort on his fat face.

Edith looked long at them before she spread the soft, grey shawl she held over them. "*Seven young gentlemen, indeed!*" she said, but there was quite a gentle smile on her face !

CHAPTER VI

SETTLING IN

THE Bears were awake early next morning. It was remarkable what a difference there was in their appearance: they laughed to see each other so fluffy and fair after their baths. Very softly they walked about the house, peeping in at open doors. At the end of a passage a group of Bears were suddenly seen approaching them. They all stopped astounded at the sight: the other Bears stopped too.

"They didn't tell us there were more people here," said Albert, astonished.

As neither party seemed willing to take the first step towards making friends—or enemies—Lord Rushington pulled himself together. Straightening the front of the little coat covered with buttons which he was the only Bear to wear, he advanced grandly towards the Bears who were huddling together looking at them. At this a Bear, equally grandly dressed, stepped forward to meet him.

"I suppose you know this house belongs to us," he said, throwing back his head and swaggering a little.

The other Bear smiled in a superior sort of way and threw his head back just as grandly.

Lord Rushington was highly annoyed. "But what I don't suppose you do know," he went on, "is that you look a perfect fool."

Albert moved forward and laid his paw on Lord Rushington's shoulder. "There isn't any need to be rude,

Rushie," he said. "I think they've lost their way. Look how surprised they seem."

"I don't know about 'surprised,'" said the angry Lord Rushington. "I think they are all ugly and all idiots and that big Bear, you see, is telling that showing-off overdressed one the same thing."

Stubbins, who had come forward into the front row, now exclaimed, "Look, Rushie, he's got buttons on *exactly* like yours! Oh, look—why, I do believe—I *do* believe it is us!"

Stubbins was perfectly right. It was a large full-length mirror which confronted them in the rather dark end of the passage. The 'perfect fool, the showing-off overdressed one' was Lord Rushington himself. The others were a good deal quicker than he was to see the joke of this; they joined paws round him, kicking and throwing their legs about with cries of "Perfect fool! Showing-off one!" till Lord Rushington very nearly cried with rage. Calming down at last but rather hungry for some breakfast after their excitement, the Bears with some difficulty found their way back to the Nursery. Here they found Edith deep in serious conversation with Bitty.

Bitty had had an idea. He wished the dolls'-house put on the flat roof outside the window; Edith was objecting on the score of safety.

"A great bird or something might come upon you," she said, "or a heavy storm of rain. These little houses are not built for out of doors; you had much better be content where you are."

"How *can* I be?" asked Bitty passionately. "How would *you* like your house put up on a piano? It's a garden I want: I've always wanted my own garden."

Edith shook her head but made no remark. Burnett, who was ranging small chairs round a little low table, here came forward. "I have an idea, sir," he said.

Bitty looked a little suspicious; he did not really very much like any one else to have ideas but himself. In a vague way he felt he made up in good ideas what he lacked in the size to put them into action.

"I think," went on Burnett in a soothing voice, standing before the dolls'-house and automatically pushing the furniture straight, "I think there is a large table downstairs; we will bring that up and put it in the window here. I'll get some turf cut and we can make a little garden on the table and you can have another out on that roof, but first I'll have some wire or something put round it. Now, here are the young gentlemen all ready for their breakfast. Now, you sit down here and I'll soon have it ready, and then we'll go into the garden and see the Gardener and find out what he can do."

"Better have him upstairs," said Edith. "Then he can see just what's wanted." She was anxious, too, to see the effect made on him by the strange arrivals: but she would not show this; she merely added severely, "And see he wipes his shoes and doesn't bring a lot of mud in on my carpets."

The Bears were enjoying bowls of grape-nuts and honey—all except Golden Syrup, who asked for plain bread. "But only just for this morning, please," he added quickly.

Bitty had two grape-nuts, some toast-crumbs, and one of the dolls'-house bowls had been filled with honey. Orange Pekoe sat next him in a little arm-chair, happily licking the honey from his own little bowl.



"I suppose you know that this house belongs to us," he said.

(see p. 46)



An arm . . . showed for a moment above the window-ledge.

(see p. 56)

In came Burnett again, followed by a grey-haired old man carrying a trowel.

Burnett led him up to Stubbins. "This is the cook's husband; he's Mr. Bathe, sir," he said gravely.

"Has he?" said Stubbins, bundling off his chair. "Well, we often do, but not last night, did we, Edith?" Stubbins chuckled his fat chuckle, but the Bears said mechanically, "Don't be silly, Stub."

Mr. Bathe smiled gravely. He seemed to take the new Master of the House in his stride and did not look in the least taken aback, to the disappointment of Edith. He opened the window and stepped out on to the roof, looked upwards, downwards, and all around, and then remarked, "A bit of glass would do this trick. There's the remains of the old conservatory: we could soon tack that up around here: then there would be light and sun and what you might call safety. How would you like a glass house here?" he asked the Bears. They showed their approval by capering round him.

"But it's really for *me*," shouted Bitty. "My house will go out there and Pekoe and me will have a garden: can we have real grass?"

Mr. Bathe again peered round about and up into the sky as if he expected grass to fall from Heaven.

"You leave it to me," he said. "It's a good strong lead roof and will hold a thing or two. You just leave it to me."

The Bears were quite willing, and, having eaten all they could and submitted rather unwillingly to having their mouths and paws wiped firmly by Edith, they went in a body to explore, Bitty riding on Albert's shoulder, Orange Pekoe clinging to Velvet Trousers.

They spent the morning roaming about the garden,
S.M. D

climbing trees and chasing each other. They had a large lunch downstairs in the hall and fell asleep in a row on the big sofa till it was time to wake up and have a large tea, and it was not till tea was finished that they went back to the 'nursery suite.'

Mr. Bathe and his underlings had been working hard and fast and the roof was quite transformed. Glass walls four foot high had been fastened round the parapet and about one half had been roofed in with glass. In one corner of this the big dolls'-house stood. Turfs had been brought in and laid on a layer of earth and rolled flat so that the little house now stood on grass. Several small trees and shrubs with their pots buried in turf had been set here and there for shade and little flower-beds marked out. A path covered thickly with bird-sand rolled smooth led from the front door to the window and so into the house; about half-way along it branched out and another path led through turf and shrubs to the far end of the roof where a large deep tray was sunk in the turf providing a bathing-pool. Children's stone bricks carefully arranged in patterns bordered the pool and built a diving erection at one end, while at the other stood a small bathing-house built in red and white stone squares.

As the Bears gazed enchanted at this beautiful little garden and Bitty, holding to Albert's fur, could not speak at all for excitement, Edith came to the window. She had been rummaging in the old disused cupboard and had in her hand a tiny red rowing boat which she carefully laid on the little pool, while in the other hand she carried a bright red sports car.

"Wind it up, wind it up!" shrieked Bitty, beside himself with excitement.

Edith wound it up and stood it down outside the front door of the dolls'-house. Bitty climbed in, took the wheel, and Edith let go. Away went the little car down the sandy path. Bitty tried to make it circle the bathing pool, but it was going too fast; he turned too sharply and disappeared with a great splash into the water.

Albert ran across the grass and scooped the car with the spluttering Bitty out of the water. Bitty stood on the stone path, dripping and using all the worst words he knew, "Squashed slugs! Dirty handkerchiefs! Slimy worms! Bad fish!" till Edith, who had tears of laughter in her eyes, picked him up, and put him into the dolls'-house bathroom, filled the bath with warm water and handed him in a few inches of bath-towel, a piece of soap and a sponge not as big as a postage stamp, and shut the door. For some minutes Bitty could be heard kicking the door and saying more horrible words; but presently the Bears, standing in a row with broad, delighted smiles on their faces (they loved it when Bitty lost his temper and raged), heard his angry cries die down and soon the sound of splashing water came to their ears and Bitty singing in quite a pleasant voice.

Peace was restored. The Bitty House was in action.

CHAPTER VII

COMPANION'S FLIGHT

SOME weeks had gone by and the Bears felt thoroughly at home in their new house. Burnett's polite but firm insistence had accustomed them to sitting round the table and eating their meals as properly as they could. Edith insisted on a bath once a week and, from being a horror to the Bears, this had become quite popular, especially as they now used bath-salts. Because they threw these in handfuls into the bath and sat down on them very quickly so as to get the full scent, their baths were not quite as comfortable at the beginning as they were later when the sharp salts had melted, but, on the whole, they began to enjoy being 'young gentlemen.'

There was even a bottle of eau de Cologne in the bathroom and a touch of this on the tip of their fur made them feel very grand, though they were cautious about using any after Lord Rushington poured it all over his head and shoulders one day and rushed away shrieking because it so stung his eyes and skin.

More finishing touches had also been put to the Bitty House Estate, and it had become a very popular resting-place for all the Bears. Bitty had insisted on the turf being so laid against the front of the house that it could not be opened as a dolls'-house is opened, all the front of the house together, but only the front door, so that though Bitty and Orange Pekoe could go in and out, the Bears could not, they were too big. Bright-coloured handkerchiefs had

been slung from shrub to shrub and on these—as on hammocks—the Bears would lie.

One afternoon Albert was lazily stretched out in a hammock pretending to read a letter, Sleepie was curled on the grass under a bush fast asleep, Golden Syrup was away downstairs 'helping' Mrs. Bathe. Velvet Trousers, who was interested in mechanical things in a fumbling sort of way, was lying with his head under Bitty's little car staring up at its works and wondering about it all. Orange Pekoe and Bitty were out of sight inside their house. Stubbins and Lord Rushington thought they would take a walk together. The Bears were fond of looking for very small plants with very small flowers for Bitty, so they each took a tiny basket and an egg-spoon broken off short as a trowel and set off. Ever since the old gardener had brought in a red-currant bush in its full glory and planted it near the Bitty House and Bitty had stood below it seeing how the sun shone ruby red through the bunches hanging everywhere, each to him the size of an apple, he had been filled with a love for the garden and spent happy hours carrying water in a doll's jug from his bathing-pool to refresh his flowers.

Lord Rushington and Stubbins soon reached the gate at the end of the drive which led out into the road. Though it was wide open, they preferred to squeeze through a gap in the paling beside it and clamber down into a ditch and up the other side into the road. Then they searched each other for burrs and set off on their walk, plodding steadily along, looking now and then in the grass which edged the road for any small flowers. Stubbins dug up an eye-bright and laughed to see its ridiculous, bonneted face.

Presently they came to a small house which was built at

right-angles to the road. The side wall of this very ugly house rose straight up from the road without any garden between. In this wall was a window and from the window came noises such as the Bears used to hear at night in London coming from angry cats on the roofs and in the gardens ; but as they came nearer they realized it was the noise of angry, quarrelling children.

The two Bears stood still underneath the window, rather enjoying this.

“Beast ! I hate you !” (Slap.)

“Pig-you-are !” (Slap.) “Anyhow, away goes your wretched Bear !” (Slap, slap, scream, slap.)

An arm, wearing a bright blue sleeve, showed for a moment above the window-ledge, the hand attached to it held a large, white Teddy Bear by its arm : the Bear was swung violently round and round, flew up into the air, and fell with a heavy thump into the ditch at the side of the road.

“Gosh !” exclaimed Lord Rushington, startled out of his usually grand speech.

“Yes, *isn't* it ?” agreed Stubbins, tip-toeing to the edge of the ditch and peering in. “What a mercy it's only a toy.”

They peered down into the ditch. A large, white (or once white) Teddy Bear was lying face downwards in the ditch.

As they looked at it, a thought struck Stubbins. “Shall we take it home, Rushie, and have a real toy of our own ?” he asked Lord Rushington.

Hardly had his words been heard than the head of the white Bear turned completely round and looked at them without his body moving at all. He stared at them silently and then his head finished a circle and went down again into the ditch. Stubbins and Lord Rushington at once began to

twist their own necks to see if their heads too could go round in a circle, but they could not.

Lord Rushington drew a little nearer, cleared his throat and said, “Ahem ! I fear you have had an unfortunate accident, sir, of rather an—er—an unusual kind.”

“Not so unusual,” answered a slow, muffled voice from the ditch.

Certain now that this Bear was a proper Bear like themselves and no toy, Stubbins and Lord Rushington threw themselves into the ditch and struggled with brambles and branches till the Bear was dislodged and dragged up on to the road. He was seen to be very large, larger even than Albert, and showed signs of a good deal of wear and tear ; he looked quite old and his voice was deep and slow. Looking at him, Lord Rushington and Stubbins decided he had a battered, merry, trustworthy face.

“There's a boy and girl up there,” he said, jerking with his paw upwards towards the window overhead. “They were sent down here when there was bombing in London and I was bought for them to keep them quiet. Keep them quiet, indeed !” he added indignantly. “It would take a steam-roller to keep those two quiet !”

“How ?” asked Stubbins, astonished.

“Don't be stupid, Stub,” said Lord Rushington, and then to the white Bear he said grandly, “It's perceptible to me you have had a lot of agrafication to put up with. Now, we have a dromain here where you can restide while you look about you.”

The Bear looked about him by turning his head round in a complete circle and then said, “I haven't the least idea what you are talking about, my boy.”

Lord Rushington swelled so with indignation at being

called 'my boy' that Stubbins hurried to speak before he could. "I believe he means we have a house near here, and won't you leave these horrid people and come?" he said. "Lord Rushington is terribly clever: he often speaks so that absolutely *no one* can understand him!" he added, looking very proudly at his friend, who looked a little soothed by this praise.

The big white Bear smiled very slowly, but smiled till his whole face was lit up and his eyes almost disappeared into his fur. "Come along, little fellows, then," he said, "and come along quickly."

Almost as he spoke, the window above them was thrown open and a boy's head looked out. "I expect the poor old object fell in the ditch," he said, peering about. "I'll go down and get him." A thundering sound of feet on uncarpeted stairs was then heard.

Lord Rushington looked at Stubbins. "Run!" he said briefly: he had no time to resent being called a 'little fellow.'

The three Bears seized paws and started along the road towards home at their best pace. The white Bear in the middle ran with his head looking backwards so as to report the movements of the children if they should pursue them. They heard shouts in the road behind them, but saw no one and dived through the hole in their own fence safely, dropping into a walk when they found themselves in the grounds of Stubbington Manor.

"What is your name, white Bear?" asked Stubbins as they reached the front door, "because I shall have to introduce you, you know."

"Companion is my name, little chap," answered the old Bear, smiling down at him.

They stubbed up the steps and into the hall. It was tea-time and the Bears were all seated round the table: Burnett was spreading honey on buns at the side table and all heads were turned towards him.

Stubbins led Companion up to Albert, who rose to his feet, a little taken aback to find a Bear larger than he was. Stubbins, rather pink, introduced them. The Bears listened attentively while he told them of the adventure they had had and how Companion had 'come flying down like a great white angel,' as he said, anxious to be polite, "And, Albert, please, could he stay here, any how for a bit, because those horrid children are out looking for him and really they *don't* know how to behave?"

"It's your house, Stubbins," Albert answered rather stiffly: he was quite unused to looking up to a Bear and did not like it.

Companion was old and wise and almost seemed to understand this, for he sat down on the chair next to Albert and smiled his wide, kind smile. "It must be quite a responsibility for you looking after these youngsters."

Albert unbent at once and soon the two Bears, one so clean and well fed, one so tattered and ragged with an ear half-torn off and his fur only nominally white, were deep in low-toned talk.

Suddenly they were all startled by a ring at the front-door bell. Burnett moved in his dignified fashion to the front door and shut the inner door which divided it from the hall in which they sat. The Bears sat without stirring, listening with all their ears. Albert desperately turned over in his mind places in which an old Bear, so big but very thin, might be hidden. They heard Burnett's voice, "I

don't know, I'm sure, sir." Then some gabbling talk they could not catch.

"If you'll step into the drawing-room, sir, I'll inquire," Burnett's voice again. Then the sound of a scuffle and Burnett exclaiming, "Not that way, sir! Not that way! Sir—sir!"

The door was flung open and a boy dipped under Burnett's arm and ran in on all fours, almost upsetting him, followed by a little girl. Instantly the Bears froze. Almost without thinking, they took the attitude they had all known long ago in the far off, unhappy days of shop-life—staring eyes, legs and arms held stiffly out before them. The two children, having burst in so rudely, seemed almost startled to find themselves in this peaceful, quiet room, so full of the spell of old age and beauty. They stared silently at the Bears round the table.

"Golly!" said the boy at last. "Some kid's having a party. Golly, what a lot of them!"

"Aren't they rather sweet?" said the little girl, drawing nearer. "Look at that tiny little one, and that one's nearly as big as ours, and that one—Jimmy, look, *there's* ours! Look, he's got his ear hanging down like I tore him!"

"Miss, please," expostulated Burnett, as the little girl snatched Companion from his chair and looked at him closely.

"Well, what?" she demanded, swinging round on him fiercely. "The kids here have got lots of Bears and I've only got one. Why should they steal mine? It isn't theirs, is it, now? You just tell me the truth. Does this Bear come from this house?"

Burnett, who was a very truthful man, looked miserably

uncomfortable. "Well, now I come to think of it——" he said very slowly.

"You know it doesn't belong here," exclaimed the little girl furiously. "If you say it does I shall just ask a policeman."

"Well, you see, miss," began Burnett, "the people here are very fond of Bears, and perhaps they thought you didn't take much care of yours, and they thought you didn't want him and——"

"Well, they'll just have to think again," said Jimmy, dragging Companion from his sister's arms. "Good-bye all," and with a sweep of his arm he sent Sleepie and Lord Rushington flying to the floor, where they lay in stiff, silent indignation, and, throwing Companion over his shoulder, they marched to the door.

The Bears lay, not daring to move except their eyes, which all turned desperately towards Companion. He, his head looking backwards over Jimmy's shoulder, wobbling a little with the violence with which he had been snatched up, smiled his kind, wide smile as he was carried away into the darkness which had now fallen outside.

"And he didn't even have a little tea," exclaimed Stubbins, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SACK

THE Bears sat on a group of up-turned flower-pots in the kitchen garden. They were watching Mr. Bathe, the gardener, who was at work in the peach-house : little drops of water kept coming from Golden Syrup's mouth as he watched.

"I hear that it's a very good slogan if you eat more fruit," he said at last, looking meaningly at Stubbins.

This hint was quite lost on the Master of the House, who fell into deep, bewildered thought as to how a 'slow gun' could be quickened if you eat more fruit. Stubbins could never quite realize that he was the Master of the House and therefore the fruit his, so he only nodded wisely and said nothing.

Lord Rushington got up, straightened his little coat, gave a rub to one of his brightest buttons, and strolled to the fruit house. The other Bears began to talk of Companion, who was in their minds continually.

Mr. Bathe came out of the house to fetch some more nails from the near-by shed and when he came back and went in again Lord Rushington went in with him. He looked at the lovely peaches, but for some time contented himself with strolling up and down on the boarded walk between the shelves, sniffing the warm, scented air : at last the sight of a particularly beautiful peach overcame him and he remarked very carelessly, "Thanks, Bathe, I'll have that one."

Mr. Bathe looked gravely down on him. "That is for Mr. Stubbins to decide," he said.

Lord Rushington was furious. "*Stubbins!*" he exclaimed. "Why, he can't decide anything ! If I told him to decide to give me that peach, he would give it at once. So give it to me : in fact, give me a basketful."

"It's not for me to give away the Master's fruit without his leave, and, if I gave you a basketful, what would be left for him ? They don't all ripen together."

Lord Rushington flung angrily out of the house and back to the group of Bears. "That gardener man very badly wants the sack, Stubbins," he began in a rage. "If I were you, I should give it to him."

Stubbins slipped quickly from his flower-pot. He was very fond of the old gardener and flew at his best pace to the shed where on one of their explorations he had noticed a pile of sacks. Hastily collecting the cleanest he saw, he shook it out and dragged it after him to the door of the fruit-house, watched by the astonished Bears. He rapped sharply on the door and Mr. Bathe opened it for him and Stubbins went in, tripping and stumbling over the large sack.

Lord Rushington looked uncomfortable.

"And what is this for, little Master ?" asked Mr. Bathe, bending down towards the eager little Bear.

"Rushie said I was to give you the sack," he said, holding up as much of it as he could gather into his short arms.

Mr. Bathe's eyes twinkled. "Well, I'm sure that's very kind of him," he remarked. "And right kind of you to bring it for me : I'm not as young as I was."

"Nor am I," said Stubbins happily.

"Now, I'll tell you what we'll do," said Mr. Bathe; "we'll put all these boxes inside and carry them all together. I'll carry them on my back and you can ride pick-a-back."

Stubbins rode triumphantly back to where the others were sitting. "You were right, Rushie," he said; "he was awfully pleased with the sack."

Lord Rushington fidgeted a little: really it was very difficult to deal with Stubbins. "I was only remarking," he began, "that it seems rather an absurdity to keep on growing more fruit—as we're *told* to," he added virtuously; "and then for none of us to eat it."

"Do you want more fruit sent in?" The gardener asked this question directly of Stubbins, who blinked and said rather timidly, "We like fruit—not more fruit, that sounds a bit greedy, but *some* fruit."

"More than you have now, I meant," said the gardener.

"Well, more than we have now, because we don't have any now. I thought it all belonged to you."

"It belongs to you, sir," said the old gardener. "What I am trying to get at is, do you want more than the two baskets which I fill when the pale yellow Bear brings them every day for you?"

Here all eyes turned towards Golden Syrup, who suddenly got down from his perch and began to wander into the rhubarb where he was soon out of sight among the big leaves. All the eyes then turned back to the gardener who stood waiting: there was a long and awkward pause.

It was broken at length by Albert. "I think what Stubbins would like, wouldn't you, Stub?" ("Yes, I should!" put in Stubbins quickly) "would be if you could alter it a little and put the fruit into *one* basket, and put it—er—in the kitchen, so that we could——" Albert

felt himself getting tied up: he did not want, none of them did, to give Golden Syrup away.

"So that we could eat it," said Sleepie suddenly with a yawn.

The gardener nodded, took up his sack, and walked off.

Albert sprang into the rhubarb followed by all the Bears except Lord Rushington. He watched the old man going away from him down the path with rather an uncomfortable feeling inside him. Then suddenly he rushed down the path after him, calling out his name.

The old man stopped. Lord Rushington came up to him and stood rather awkwardly, scratching up the dust with one foot, his head hanging.

"I didn't really mean that about the sack," he brought out at last with some difficulty. "Or at least only a very *tiny* sack," he added, beginning to laugh as he saw Mr. Bathe's eyes were twinkling. "About *so* big," and Lord Rushington measured off the tiniest sack in the air and marched away with his paws behind his back.

BITTY HAS AN IDEA

BITTY took hold of the string which was fastened to a ball which hung near his window and pulled it till the bell rang and rang again to summon the Bears.

They all came running and tumbling along, climbed over the window-ledge, and walked carefully over his grass towards his house. Bitty was most particular about their behaviour when they came into his grounds and there were notices up ordering 'No Bumbling'. Bitty sat down on a chair under a bush, Orange Pekoe came running out holding a duster; it was his delight to clean and re-clean the Bitty House.

"I've got an idea," announced Bitty when his audience had collected. "We just can't leave that wretched Companion to his fate. Let's all go along there and I will climb up the house and look in: they probably won't see me, and anyhow I will have my bow and arrow. Now, which of you will come?"

All the Bears shouted, "Me!" and in a very short time they were all marching together down the drive shouting the Bears' National Anthem:

"Bears, Bears, Glorious Bears,
We don't care who listens, we don't care who hears,
We are the glorious, glorious Bears!"

On reaching the little houses in the lane, they stood still to consult under a leafy bush. Bitty stared up at the window above their heads and at the creepers covering



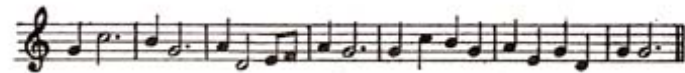
"Rushie said I was to give you the sack."

the wall below. The window was open a few inches.

"I could get in there, if some one heaved me up on to the creeper. You, Velvet, will you?"

"Any of us could climb up there," said Albert gruffly. "You had better let one of us go." But Bitty paid no attention to him.

As they stood there, suddenly a sound of a faint, sweet little tune came to them:—



The Bears looked at one another, surprised and charmed. Again and again the faint, fairy-like tune rang out.

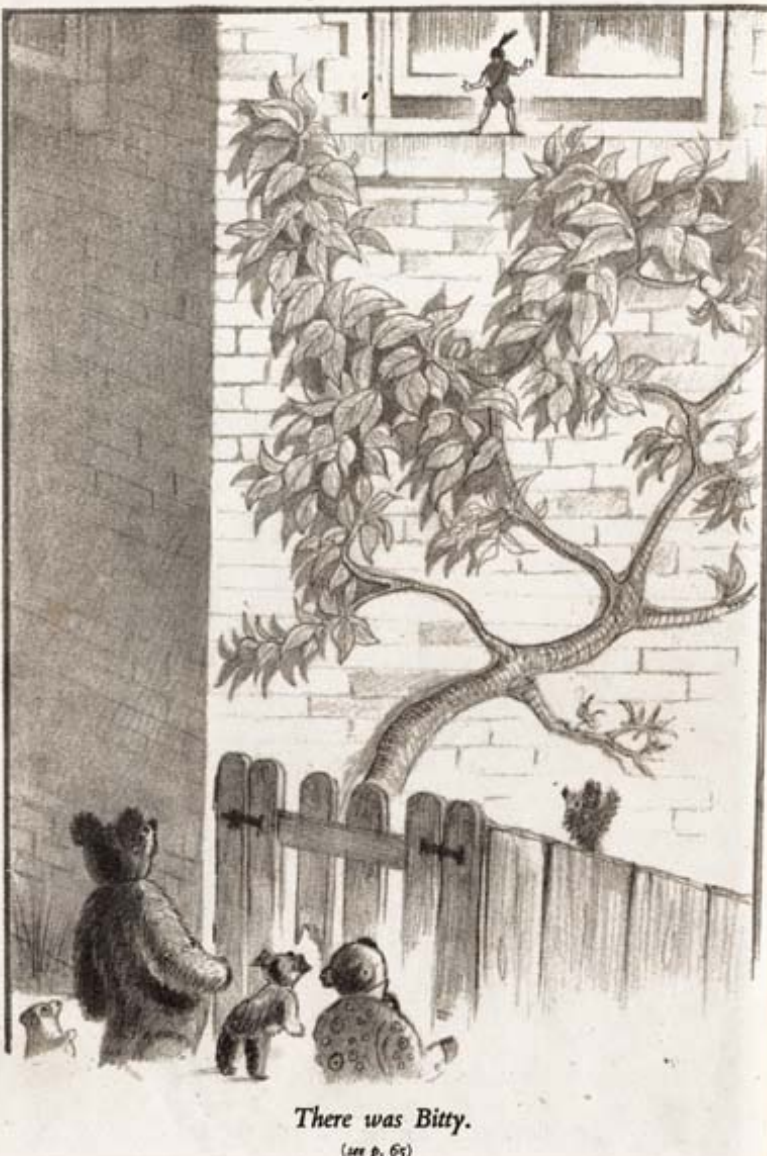
Bitty beckoned silently to Velvet Trousers, who picked him up and put him on his shoulder, and the two of them crossed the road and stood under the little window.

There was a flutter and rustle among the leaves of the creeper growing up the wall of the cottage—Bitty was gone. The Bears, open-mouthed, watched the leaves moving in clusters up and up as the tiny boy clambered among them; then suddenly there was the green and scarlet glimpse of Bitty's clothes on the window-ledge, and they saw him squeeze under the window and disappear. Standing in a row, they waited, breathing very heavily, staring upwards unwinkingly.

Hours seemed to go by. Albert stirred uneasily and took a pace forward, when suddenly there was Bitty again stepping out on to the window-ledge and waving to some one behind him before he disappeared again among the creepers, coming down at last to where Velvet Trousers stood against the wall. Heavy sighs of relief went up

There was Bitty.

(see p. 65)



from all the Bears as Velvet Trousers came hurrying to them with the precious Bitty on his shoulder. They scampered up the lane and in at the hole in their fence. They scampered as if pursued till they reached their own room where Bitty sprang down on to his own ground and turned at once to the Bears with his usual, excited, "I have an idea."

The Bears, rather exhausted, sat down round him. Sleepie, drawing a little into the shadow of Albert, put his chin on his paws and shut his eyes: he was not much interested in Bitty's ideas; they always meant a lot of rushing about, he thought, yawning pleasantly and sinking his chin a little more comfortably into his fur.

"I saw poor old Companion," began Bitty. "He looked very battered, but smiled at me in—well, you know that nice way he has of smiling. We had a long talk. I couldn't get him away because the children were out and the door was locked and we couldn't push up that heavy window."

"Did you hear a rather nice little tune, Bitty?" asked Stubbins.

"I was going to tell you," Bitty said. "Companion told me there is a little boy in the joining cottage who is always ill. He lies all by himself all day, because his Mother goes out to work and he has a Bear—one of us, you know, not a toy, and it is *blue*! And he sings this little tune over and over again, and the little boy has him with him all the time. Now, this is my Idea. Why don't we go to the town and Stubbins shall buy two Bears just as much like Companion and Musical as we can find? We will bash them about a bit and then watch our chance and exchange them! You see, even if Com-

panion escaped, those wretched children would come up here and look for him, and I can't think where we would hide him, because they would know this is where he would come to. Of course the little boy who is ill could get here, but I think it would be rather hard on him to take his one comfort and leave him nothing, don't you? So, Stubbins, we'll go off shopping now: you go and order the car."

"And tell them to make it sharp!" snapped Lord Rushington in an authoritative voice.

Stubbins hurried away down the long passage towards the kitchen. It seemed a pity to spoil such a lovely car, he thought. Running into Burnett in the hall, he asked him in his gentle, rather anxious little voice if he thought they could have the car out. And, on Burnett's saying, "Certainly, sir," Stubbins added, "And will you sharpen it just only a *tiny* little bit?" And back upstairs he trotted, imagining regretfully the beautiful, shining bonnet of the car being put into some sort of a giant pencil-sharpener.

In a remarkably short time, the car was at the door, James still rather red and rebellious, and the Bears trooped into it, asking to be driven to the best toy-shop.

CHAPTER X

IN THE NIGHT

IT was the middle of the night and all the Bears were sleeping soundly.

On the floor lay a large white toy Bear, remarkably like Companion. Its fur had been ruffled and rubbed, its head well loosened in its socket so that it could now turn completely round in a circle. One ear hung by a thread. The Bears had romped and wrestled with it till it looked shabby enough to match Companion. They had thrown it downstairs and, laughing madly, had dragged it upstairs and all about the corridors by one leg. They had done their work well and much enjoyed doing it.

Beside it lay a smaller and even more worn Bear. One ear had gone altogether and so had one eye. It had been dipped in water containing blue, and now lay drying, a fine sky-blue colour.

All of a sudden, the silence of the night was broken by a low wail, a wail which rose to a shriek, dropped to a wail again and rose once more to a louder and louder shriek. The Bears sprang awake on the instant, as indeed it was impossible not to. "Sirens! Sirens!" they shouted joyfully, crowding out on to Bitty's garden and clambering on to the wire netting.

The noise went on and was echoed from here, there, and everywhere about the dark countryside. Presently the Bears were delighted to see red lights appearing and disappearing in the sky, and when a great shower of coloured

lights fell behind some tall trees not very far away they clapped and screamed with excitement and pleasure.

Then came Edith: climbing out of the window in a flurry, she seized them one after another, tore them from the wire netting to which they clung, tumbled them all into her dressing-gown, which she held like a sack in front, thrust her hand in at Bitty's open window and brought him out, dived it in again for Orange Pekoe, dropped them both into the pocket of her dressing-gown, and hurried away downstairs to the strongly built stone kitchen where she released them upon the big table. Ruffled and annoyed, the Bears struggled upright.

"My goodness, Edith," exclaimed Lord Rushington, highly indignant, "can't we look out at the fire-works without being dragged about as if we weren't anybody at all?"

Lord Rushington's angry speech was interrupted by the entry of Burnett.

"The cottage in the lane is on fire," he said, speaking very quickly and panting as if he had been running. "They are bringing the two children here; they are quite all right. Edith, you had better get rooms and hot-water bottles ready, and I think you should suggest to the 'young gentlemen' that they should keep to their own rooms till we see what's what. We don't want any funny business with those two children. Are they all asleep up there, do you suppose?"

"No," said Edith complacently, "I brought them all down here where it's safer. I just swished them up all together—quite indignant his lordship was. Here they all are, on the table." She turned towards it—but the table was bare.

At the words 'the cottage in the lane' the Bears had taken one look at each other, slipped noiselessly from the table, raced across the room keeping in the shadows, and run out by the back-door into the dark garden. Bitty and Orange Pekoe clung desperately to the fur of the large ones and they all ran helter-skelter as fast as they could go towards the cottage. Only one thought was in their minds—Companion and Musical—whatever happened to the children, *they* were supremely important.

Half-way up the drive they met a small gathering of people and recognized the voices of James and Mr. Bathe and the shrill chatter of the children. "We even brought this wretched Bear," the boy was saying; "he's scorched all down his left leg and I don't know why we bothered, but here he is." These excited voices died away as they moved towards the house.

The Bears raced on, fat Golden Syrup panting and stumbling behind. The first part of the cottage was nearly burnt out; the roof had gone: the further part, where Companion had told Bitty that the little invalid boy lay, had fire on its roof, but was not yet destroyed. Over the gate went the Bears and round to the farther door. Smoke was rolling out of it. Albert took command.

"All of you stay outside!" he commanded in a voice they all knew they must obey, and crawling on all-fours he went in at the door-way.

"Albert, Albert, come out! Come out! You'll be burnt!" shouted the Bears, jumping from one foot to the other in an agony of anxiety.

Lord Rushington seized a milk bottle which stood at the door, climbed a water-butt which stood against the wall, craned dangerously over and filled it. "Get that

little pail, Stubbins!" he shouted. "Fill it and throw it in after Albert!" Stubbins seized the pail, climbed the butt, filled the pail and hurled it, pail and water together, after Albert.

Albert meanwhile, crawling in, came up against a very thin mattress on the floor just inside the very tiny room. On it he could dimly see a small, thin boy, whose eyes watched the ceiling which was slowly blackening and whose stick-like arms clasped a shabby, pale-blue Bear to his chest. Albert seized the corner of the blanket on which the boy lay and pulled with all his might. Albert was a strong Bear, but he could not move this alone.

"Bears, Bears!" he shouted at the door. "Come in quick!"

In rushed the Bears choking and spluttering. Working under his orders, they each seized a piece of blanket and, they being strong for their size and very worked up and the boy very thin and light, the blanket started slowly moving towards the door. A few more violent tugs and it was outside, and not a moment too soon.

They dragged it down the short path and out on to the road. The little boy had his eyes closed now and seemed to have fainted. As they reached the road, Burnett, Edith, and James came running. Seeing the Bears by the glow of the fire, they seized them in their arms, squeezing, petting, and scolding them. But when they saw the little boy lying on the blanket on the road, they fell silent.

At last: "No one can have known of this poor little fellow," said Mr. Bathe gently, stooping over him. "And to think of these brave young gentlemen—well! Who would have believed it?"

"It's nothing, nothing at all," said Lord Rushington airily. "We only did what it was our duty to do. Lord Nelson did it too."

Burnett picked the little boy up very gently and wrapped him in the miserable blanket. "We'd best go home, I think," he said, and led the way up the dark lane.

Much later, when all the house was silent and every one was sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, Albert rose very softly. He turned the switch of the electric fire and, taking the likeness of Companion, he held its left leg close to the heat till it was scorched a good brown. Then he and Velvet Trousers, holding the white Bear between them, crept softly to the door of the room where Jimmy and his sister, Joan, had been put to sleep. Very softly they pushed the door open and entered. There was perfect silence inside except for the even breathing of children asleep.

"Companion!" whispered Albert into the darkness.

There was a little rustle and in the dim light they saw something white on the floor by the bed. Dragging the toy Bear forward, they laid it down close to the bed.

"Can you walk?" asked Albert in a very low whisper.

"Just manage it, I think. Heave ho!" whispered Companion, struggling to his feet. He stared in astonishment at his image lying near by and limped away after the Bears.

They led him back to the nursery suite, where, on the wide shelf of a cupboard, they had prepared a bed of all the softest covers they could find. Somehow they hoisted him up.

"To-morrow we will have air holes cut here and lock the door," said Albert. "To-night we will sleep in the

entrance and guard you. Are you all right up there, Companion?"

"Am I all *right* indeed?" came Companion's cheery whisper. "I should say I am all right."

Trembling with exhaustion, Albert and Velvet Trousers lay down in the cupboard doorway and instantly fell asleep.

CHAPTER XI

WAR AND PEACE

JIMMY and Joan were already at the breakfast-table when the Bears peeped through the banisters from above, a little nervous at making their first appearance. The children were hammering on the table with the handles of their knives and forks, chanting loudly, "We Want Breakfast! We Want Breakfast!" Edith was in the room, looking on with a puckered, disapproving face. 'I'd like to give you breakfast!' she was thinking.

Burnett, imperturbable, was preparing food on the side-table. Neither he nor Edith meant to leave their 'young gentlemen' to the far from tender mercies of this wild pair.

The Bears turned the corner of the stairs and began gravely to descend the last flight.

"We Want——" began the loud voices, but both died away at the surprising sight of a group of Bears, large and small, coming down the stairs. "We Want——" they began again mechanically, staring with all their eyes.

"You want manners," said Albert firmly, reaching the hall. Companion had told them before they left him upstairs that both children were very ticklish: "you'll have them at your mercy," he said.

"Gosh and jiggers!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Then you *were* real when we came here before. Jumping Jehoshaphat, did you ever see anything like that?"

"Aren't they Pets?" cried Joan.

The Bears were not pleased. Stubbins climbed on to

his chair at the head of the table and Albert took the other end.

"We have good manners here," said Albert very firmly. ("Syrup, take your nose out of the sugar-bowl!")

"Yes, we have the proper manner here," added Stubbins, "because this is Stubbington Manor."

"Well, of all the cheek!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Do you think we are going to be told how to behave by a lot of blooming Bears?" And, seizing a handful of lump sugar, he began to pelt them with it. Golden Syrup sprang down to tidy the lumps off the floor.

One hit Lord Rushington on the nose and made him furious. He scrambled down from his chair and ran up the back of Jimmy's, climbed to the back of his neck, and began pulling his hair with all his might. "How dare you speak like that!" he bellowed into the astonished boy's ears.

"I don't care what you say!" shouted Jimmy.

"And I don't care, either, what I say!" yelled Lord Rushington.

Here Joan flew to the rescue and Velvet Trousers seized her by the leg as she passed, so that she tripped and fell, and the Bears were instantly upon her, tickling her till she screamed for mercy. All except poor Stubbins, who, full of horror, was beseeching the telephone (whose receiver he had forgotten to remove), "Oh, please, oh, telephone, oh, police, oh, do come and *stop it!*"

Burnett, however, stopped it by pulling them all to their feet and asking in a great, bass voice quite new to the Bears, "Aren't you *ashamed?*"

Subdued, children and Bears climbed back to their places

and received the bowls of porridge Burnett laid at each place, hanging their heads.

"Listen to me, all of you," said Burnett in this same deep, slow voice. "This is a house which will not keep people in it who quarrel. It's a funny thing, but Stubbington Manor is like that. Good children, yes—it has many joys for them; but let there be trouble among them and OUT THEY GO!" Burnett said this with such solemnity and so slowly and emphatically that cold shivers ran down the children's backs and when, after an awkward pause, Albert said, "Will you have some cream?" both children replied politely, "Yes, please."

Two days passed and the new inhabitants had settled into Stubbington Manor as if they had lived there all their lives. It almost seemed as if the gracious old house had moulded the two wild children into more gracious ways. It did not seem so natural to them to use loud and angry voices and to knock things and each other about in those still and beautiful rooms. The row of surprised Bear-faces watching them at meals when they snatched food or put their tongues out at each other began to have an effect on them. When Albert in a practical manner picked out the two largest cakes, which were the only ones which had cherries on them, and Golden Syrup said in his polite voice, "Those are the ones you will want, aren't they?" both of them turned pink and looked a little foolish. They ate the large cakes given them, but at the next meal they took the ones nearest them.

Edith had soon disposed of the difficulty of keeping Companion always hidden. She produced a pail filled with coffee and briskly plunged the great white Bear inside and in a few minutes a fine, large coffee-coloured Bear

was drying his fur in the sunshine of Bitty's little garden. Coming down the stairs to join the rest of the Bears with Stubbins to show him round, they found Jimmy in the hall. He stared hard at Companion.

"I say, that Bear's extraordinarily like our Bear, only it's brown," he exclaimed, coming close to them, "Ours has a mouth which goes up at the corner like that. What's his name?"

Stubbins hesitated, his heart beating fast. "White Companion," he said at last.

"Why *white*?" asked Jimmy.

"Because he's——" Stubbins stopped. "Because he's *brown*," he said firmly.

"Golly! What an idiotic reason!" exclaimed Jimmy, and banged out of the room, whistling.

The case of the little invalid boy and the blue musical Bear had settled itself very happily. The old Bear had been much on Albert's mind, for he could not believe he could enjoy being hugged in one position every day and all day long by that thin little arm. It might be Sleepie's idea of bliss, but Albert could not believe any one else would care for it.

Actually it was Sleepie who solved the problem. Little Mike was enchanted when he found the house was full of these delightful Bears and watched them whenever they were in sight. The kind Bears did all they could to enliven him. Burnett had found a wheeled couch and on this little Mike lay and was wheeled from patch of shade to patch of shade under the beautiful trees in the garden. Sleepie was deeply envious of the lucky blue Bear who could lie undisturbed and still—and indeed had to—for hours and hours on end; and one afternoon, staring at

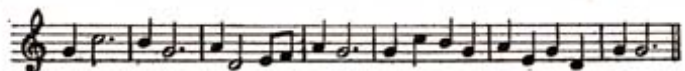
him longingly, Sleepie climbed up on the other side and, pursing up his face into a very coaxing expression, he crept into the crook of Mike's other arm, drew a corner of his blanket over him and made himself as small as possible. Mike was delighted. "What do you want?" he whispered, for he was afraid of frightening him away.

"Sleep," whispered Sleepie, opening his little red mouth in a comfortable yawn. "Badly," he added.

He lay there, warm, soft, and small, sometimes opening one eye and looking up with a mischievous smile. The other Bears stood round silently.

When Mike's expression showed he was enchanted with the little creature, Albert asked, "Can we have Musical in exchange for a bit?"

Mike handed him over very cheerfully and the blue Bear, supported by Albert and Velvet, tottered between them to the house where they fed him with bits of biscuits softened in syrup and he rewarded them by bending to and fro till he produced his faint fairy tune :



Lord Rushington meanwhile had approached Mike's wheeled bed and was rather shyly sewing a few buttons on to his pyjamas while Golden Syrup came up carrying a bowl of some sweet stuff which he slopped over now and then on to his paws and then Syrup had to stop and lick them clean again ; but still there was just a little left in the bowl when at last he gave it to Mike to enjoy. Sleepie slept sounder and sounder, now and then giving a little wriggle of satisfaction and snuggling down even further.

Edith looked down from a window in great content. Even Jimmy and Joan were quiet and happy, each with a small piece of ground to dig up where they believed they would shortly be able to plant, and then pick and eat, strawberries. All was at peace in Stubbington Manor.

GLORY

BURNETT came silently through the swing door leading from the kitchen passage into the hall where the Bears were spending a wet afternoon lying on the rug while Jimmy read *Alice in Wonderland* to the whole party. He had just got to "‘You, who are you?’ said the caterpillar," and Stubbins, full of interest but a little bewildered by the tale, had just asked, "And who was she?" when it was seen that Burnett was carrying on his silver tray a fine, golden telegram.

"For Mr. Albert Bair," he announced, handing it to that gentleman.

"Oh, glory, read it, Albert!" cried the Bears, jostling round him.

Albert opened it solemnly and read out, "Mr. Albert Bair. For Great Bravery under Fire. You are requested to be at your front gate to-morrow morning at 11 punctually. By order of His Majesty the King."

"Jumping Jehoshaphat!" said Jimmy, breaking the awed silence.

"Yes, *isn't* it?" added Stubbins fervently.

Next morning all was happy bustle and confusion. Bears ran up the stairs, Bears ran down the stairs. Bitty wore a scarlet hip-berry, hollowed out and set on his head at a jaunty angle. Lord Rushington attacked every one of his buttons with much spit and polish. Albert decided to remain bare.

At five minutes to eleven every Bear was outside the



"Albert! Albert! Come out! Come out! You'll be burnt!"
shouted the bears.

front gate. Behind them were the children, Burnett, Edith with the wheeled chair, Mrs. Bathe and Mr. Bathe. All the Bears were trembling with excitement and breathing very loudly.

"How long do we have to wait, Rushie?" whispered Velvet Trousers.

"I haven't the slightest idea," Lord Rushington answered loftily.

"What are we waiting for?" asked Golden Syrup suddenly.

The Bears looked at each other. "Why, I don't know," said Albert slowly.

"We aren't waiting for anything," put in Stubbins cheerfully. "We are just obeying the King. He sent a golden telegram saying 'stand outside your gate', and we're standing outside our gate. When he wants us to go in he'll send us another telegram or perhaps a postcard."

Before they could discuss this further a very beautiful, large and shiny car came suddenly down the road, and—oh, excitement and thrill!—stopped in front of their gate. There were two chauffeurs and one got down and threw open the door. Out of the car stepped a magnificent gentleman in uniform: many lovely medals hung shining on his chest.

He looked round in a questioning manner. His eye fell on the discreet sober figure of Burnett, standing behind the Bears. "What amazing pets," he said, indicating them, "and how well trained!"

Here Sleepie jumped twice high in the air, shouting, "He called us 'amazing pets'. We're *pets*, all of us!" Sleepie was over-excited.

The gentleman in uniform jumped almost as high as
S.M.



"The Albert Medal," he said, "by order of His Majesty the King."

(see p. 82)

Sleepic. "Great Heavens!" he exclaimed. "Can they speak?"

He stared enviously at them for some time; they all stared unwinkingly back. Then he pulled himself together, glanced at his watch, and addressed Burnett. "Are you Mr. Bair?" he asked him.

Burnett stepped forward and was about to indicate Albert, who was very stiff and pink now, when Stubbins remembered he was Master of the House and, seizing Albert's paw, said warmly, "That's him."

"You're joking," exclaimed the officer incredulously.

"No, I'm not; I'm Stubbins," Stubbins told him happily.

All the Bears turned towards Stubbins saying, "Don't be silly, Stubbins."

Stubbins relapsed into silence, but he said obstinately to himself, "I may be silly, but I am *not* Joe King."

Albert now stepped forward. "I am he," he said simply. (He had been rehearsing these words and said them beautifully.)

"*Good Heavens!*" said the fine gentleman. He stepped back to the car and consulted some one inside; then, coming up to Albert, he opened a flat case and pinned on his chest a magnificent shining medal.

"The Albert Medal," he said. "By order of His Majesty the King."

"Thank you very much," said Albert with difficulty. He was in considerable pain: the gentleman, accustomed to the thick overcoats of soldiers, had pinned the medal well and truly through Albert's skin—but Albert was not one to blench: he stood at the salute till the car was out of sight and then, with a red face and eyes smarting,

with tears turned to Burnett. "Tie it round my neck," he said. "It is not very conveniently placed."

Burnett withdrew the pin and with a piece of string tied the medal round Albert's neck, and arm in arm, Bitty and Pekoe riding their shoulders shouting and cheering (though Bitty's cheers were perhaps a little forced; he had not been noticed and was only cheered by the remembrance of a threepenny bit on the dolls'-house which he intended to have round his neck—'by order of the King,' he said firmly to himself, letting his imagination run free), Stubbins wild with excitement, sometimes running ahead and shouting, "Albert's got a medal! Albert's going to meddle,' Musical playing his tune with all his might—the whole troop marched up the drive, singing the Bears' National Anthem, back home again to Stubbington Manor.

'BUT I WANT TO KNOW . . .'

"BUT I want to know—what happened to the Bears ?

Where are they now ?"

"They are all at home with me."

"Do they live in your house ?"

"No. At the end of the garden there is a tiny little house called 'Rosings Park.' It is about 7 feet long and 5 feet wide. It has a thatched roof and on the top there is a flower-pot which looks just like a real chimney. It was given long ago to a little girl of eight years old."

"Has it got a garden ?"

"Yes—and it has a much tidier garden than it ever had before the Lady of the House went away. Outside the garden is a hedge of daisies and a hedge of box. Inside the garden there are a lot of flowers and there is a glass pool and a hare and two rabbits and little brick paths. At the gate there is a Rosemary Tree growing in honour of its namesake, the Lady of the House."

"Is that where the Bears really live ?"

"Yes. The little house is divided into two rooms. In one room live the 'girls'. I haven't told you about their doings yet. Their room is white and has a green floor and violets running round the top of the wall. The 'girls' are on arm-chairs or standing about or in bed in little bunks. They have a cage of birds hanging in one window and when you wind a handle all the birds sing very loudly and very badly ; but the 'girls' like it and so all the children who come to see the little house. In the other window there hangs some coloured glass balls to keep out witches."

"Do the Bears go in there ?"

"No. The Bears and I share the other room. I use the desk belonging to the Lady of the House because no one comes there, and the Bears keep quiet because they know I am writing about them and it makes them feel important. There they sit all round a little folding-table which has been painted green and yellow, Albert and Stubbins, Lord Rushington, Golden Syrup and Sleepie. Companion is there too and Big White Puff and Chilibombom."

"Who are Big White Puff and Chilibombom ?"

"I haven't told you about them yet."

"Will you one day ?"

"Yes, I might, if I know you want me to. Old Musical is near the other window : he is so old and stiff he only props himself against the back of the chair."

"Do they all look the same ?"

"Well, there are just a few little differences. Golden Syrup isn't quite so fat because he doesn't get as much sugar now, but he isn't what you would call thin, and I'll tell you why, only it's a secret : we have a neighbour who keeps a lot of bees."

"Does he—— ?"

"Hush !"

"What is another difference ?"

"Well, Lord Rushington has not got any little coat with buttons on it ! And I can't get him one because I can't get the buttons he likes now and they won't give a Bear coupons to get a coat."

"Perhaps he won't be so vain now ?"

"Perhaps he won't. But I believe he will. He has put on a little leather harness which really belongs to the little dog ! Do you know there is a girl Bear there too ?"

"A girl Bear ?"

"Yes ; she is a very experienced Bear ; she has been at a big

girls' school and she sits on a chair at the end of the room. She is pale blue, like Musical, and very well dressed in white silk with a cardigan on, and her baby is all dressed in white lace with satin ribbons. The Bears think she is awful; but she thinks they are too: so it's quite fair. They don't really understand each other. When I sit there writing, I hear them muttering, "A great ghastly girl!"

"That's rather rude, isn't it?"

"Very rude, but I've heard real little boys saying it."

"What does she say?"

"She looks superior and mutters about a lot of stupid men and what a mess they get into always wanting to do everything by themselves and so now we've got another war on and Stubbins looks round everywhere because he's always wanted to see a waron."

"Do men get things into a mess doing things by themselves?"

"Ah. When you're older, you will learn History: then you'll know."

"Where's Orange Pekoe?"

"He sits on a shelf in my bedroom all among the pictures of the Lady of the House, the Master of the Bears, and his brother (Companion belongs to him)."

"Where are they?"

"Across the sea—but there is an Old Brown Bear in the house where they live; so that they should feel at home."

"And Bitty? Tell me about Bitty."

"Ah! Bitty! Bitty was always a little bit of a Fairy, a little bit of a dream. He can't always be seen now, but I often find little bits of things which belong to him, his acorn cap, his match-box bed, a tiny square of bright-coloured silk cut for his counterpane. Sometimes he appears before me suddenly and gives me news; sometimes he whispers in my ear."

"What does he whisper?"

"Sometimes he whispers that one day the children will be home again and a very old verse; you wouldn't understand it."

"Well, but tell it to me. I like things I don't understand."

"Peace comes to alle after alle,

Long toyle, short stryfe, or strong sea:

Peace to them that ryde and them that falle
Either on joye or miserie.

Peace at last, beyond ye kindly starres,

Where God He smiles and waytes,

Looking on alle oure revelryes and warres,

Short joyes, sade loves, and weary hates.

Peace for alle, after most stormy daye

Cometh Peace which lasteth for alwaye."

The End.

