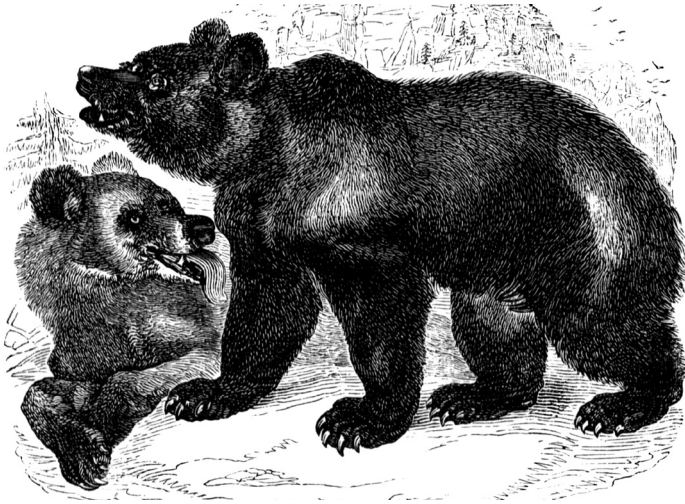


When Mother Skunk Helped Little Bear

by *Frances Margaret Fox*



Once upon a time Little Bear went for a long walk along the river path. He was alone, and so did not know that he had gone far from home until Father Kingfisher saw him and called:

“It is time for you to turn round and go back,

Little Bear! You must remember that it will soon be dark in the woods, and you might get lost, for you have no wings with which to fly home quickly.”

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

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

And away he ran. But before he had passed more than three bends of the river he saw a man fishing, and in the woods near



by was a tent, with a bright campfire burning, and beside the campfire, a man cleaning a gun.

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

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

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

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

“But won’t the men catch you?” asked Little Bear.

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

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

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



Mother Skunk walking by with her children and Little Bear, and he, too, sat still as a mouse.

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

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

“Let us always be thankful for good, kind friends!”