

THE THREE BEARS

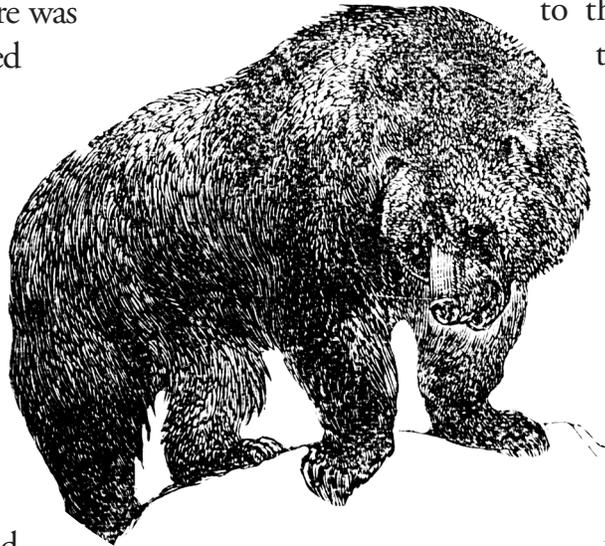
BY ROBERT SOUTHEY

In a far-off country there was once a little girl who was called Silver-hair, because her curly hair shone brightly. She was a sad romp, and so restless that she could not be kept quiet at home, but must needs run out and away, without leave.

One day she started off into a wood to gather wild flowers, and into the fields to chase butterflies. She ran here and she ran there, and went so far, at last, that she found herself in a lonely place, where she saw a snug little house, in which three bears lived; but they were not then at home.

The door was ajar, and Silver-hair pushed it open and found the place to be quite empty, so she made up her mind to go in boldly, and look all about the place, little thinking what sort of people lived there.

Now the three bears had gone out to walk a little before this. They were the Big Bear, and the Middle-sized Bear, and the Little Bear; but they had left their porridge on the table to cool. So when Silver-hair came into the kitchen, she saw the three bowls of porridge. She tasted the largest bowl, which belonged



to the Big Bear, and found it too cold; then she tasted the middle-sized bowl, which belonged to the Middle-sized Bear, and found it too hot; then she tasted the smallest bowl, which belonged to the Little Bear, and it was just right, and she ate it all.

She went into the parlour, and there were three chairs. She tried the biggest chair, which belonged to the Big Bear, and found it too high; then she tried the middle-sized chair, which belonged to the Middle-sized Bear, and she found it too broad; then she tried the little chair, which belonged to the Little Bear, and found it just right, but she sat in it so hard that she broke it.

Now Silver-hair was by this time very tired, and she went upstairs to the chamber, and there she found three beds. She tried the largest bed, which belonged to the Big Bear, and found it too soft; then she tried the middle-sized bed, which belonged to the Middle-sized Bear, and she found it too hard; then she tried the smallest bed, which belonged to the Little Bear, and found it just right, so she lay down upon it, and fell fast asleep.

While Silver-hair was lying fast asleep, the three bears came home from their walk. They came into the kitchen, to get their porridge, but when the Big Bear went to his, he growled out:

“SOMEBODY HAS BEEN TASTING MY PORRIDGE!”

and the Middle-sized Bear looked into his bowl, and said:

“Somebody Has Been Tasting My Porridge!”

and the Little Bear piped:

“Somebody has tasted my porridge and eaten it all up!”

Then they went into the parlour, and the Big Bear growled:

“SOMEBODY HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR!”

and the Middle-sized Bear said:

“Somebody Has Been Sitting In My Chair!”

and the Little Bear piped:

“Somebody has been sitting in my chair, and has broken it all to pieces!”

So they went upstairs into the chamber, and the Big Bear growled:

“SOMEBODY HAS BEEN TUMBLING MY BED!”

and the Middle-sized Bear said:

“Somebody Has Been Tumbling My Bed!”

and the little Bear piped:

“Somebody has been tumbling my bed, and here she is!”

At that, Silver-hair woke in a fright, and jumped out of the window and ran away as fast as her legs could carry her, and never went near the Three Bears’ snug little house again.