



Children's Stories That Never Grow Old.

THE THREE BEARS

IT REALLY was the neatest little cottage that ever was seen, and the three bears who lived in it were the tidiest and best-behaved bears in all that forest. For, of course, the cottage was in the middle of a forest. Bears love quiet, shady places where there are plenty of trees to climb. The cottage had a porch covered with honeysuckle, while roses climbed up the walls and peeped into the lattice-windows.

Now the three bears were not a bit like one another, for one was a Great Big Bear, and one was a Middle-sized Bear, and one was a Tiny Wee Bear. They kept the cottage very tidy, and every morning they made the great big bed, and the middle-sized bed, and the tiny wee bed, and dusted the great big chair, and the middle-sized chair, and the tiny wee chair before they sat down to breakfast.



ONE morning when the porridge was made and had been poured out into the great big bowl, and the middle-sized bowl, and the tiny wee bowl, it was so hot that the three bears went out for a walk in the wood, to pass the time until it cooled. The Great Big Bear and the Middle-Sized Bear walked along most properly, but the Tiny Wee Bear took his hoop and bowled it along in front.

Now that very morning it happened that Goldilocks lost her way in the forest. She was a very pretty little girl, with hair like threads of shining gold, and that is how she got her name. But she was very self-willed, and fancied she knew better than her mother. That is how she came to lose her way in the wood, for her mother had told her if she wandered from the path she would not be able to find her way home again.



BUT Goldilocks had tossed her head and paid no attention. And so it happened that she wandered so far that she could not find her way back, and arrived at the bears' cottage that sunny morning just after they had left it.

It was a fresh, cool morning, just the sort of morning that made Goldilocks want her breakfast more than usual, for she had run out before it was ready, and when she came to the pretty little cottage she skipped for joy.

"I am sure some kind person lives here, and will give me some bread and milk," she said to herself. And then she peeped through the open door.

"There does not seem to be any one at home," she said anxiously. "But oh, what a delicious smell of porridge!"



SHE could not wait another moment, but walked in and sat down in the great big chair and took a spoonful of porridge out of the great big bowl. "Ugh!" she cried, making a face, "this is far too salt, and this chair is much too hard!"

So she changed her seat and tried the middle-sized chair, and tasted the porridge out of the middle-sized bowl.

"Oh dear me! this has no salt at all," she said, "and this chair is far too soft." And laying down the spoon she jumped up in a great hurry. Then she tried the tiny wee chair and took a spoonful of the porridge out of the tiny wee bowl.

"This is simply delicious!" she cried, "and the little chair is just right, too."

And she ate and ate till she finished all the porridge out of the tiny wee bowl! And the tiny little chair was so comfortable that she curled herself up in it until suddenly the seat gave a crack and she fell right through on to the floor.

GOLDILOCKS picked herself up and looked round to see if she could find a sofa to rest on, for she was now so sleepy she could scarcely keep her eyes open. Then she saw a staircase, and she climbed up at once to see if there was a bed in the room above. And sure enough in the room upstairs she found three beds, standing side by side under the open lattice-window where the roses peeped in.

She threw herself at once on to the great big bed, but it was so hard that she rolled off as quickly as she could. Then she tried the middle-sized bed, but it was so soft that she sank right in and felt quite smothered. So then she tried the tiny wee bed, and it was just soft enough, and so deliciously comfortable that she curled herself up on it with a big sigh of content, and went fast asleep in the twinkling of an eye.



PRESENTLY home came the three bears from their walk, and they went to the table to begin their breakfast.

"Who has been sitting in my chair?" growled the Great Big Bear in his great big voice. For the cushion had been pulled all to one side.

"Who has been sitting in my chair?" said the Middle-sized Bear in her middle-sized voice. For there was a large dent in the cushion where Goldilocks had sat.

"Who has been sitting in my chair, and broken it right through?" said the Tiny Wee Bear in his tiny wee voice.

Meanwhile the Great Big Bear had been staring at his great big bowl of porridge which had a spoon sticking in it.

"Who has been eating my porridge?" he growled in his great big voice.



"WHO has been eating my porridge?" said the Middle-sized Bear in her middle-sized voice.

"Who has been eating my porridge and has eaten it all up?" cried the Tiny Wee Bear in his tiny wee voice.

Then the three bears searched all round the room to see if they could find out who had been there. Next they climbed up the stairs to look in the bedroom.

But the moment the Great Big Bear saw his bed all rumpled and tossed about he growled in his great big voice, "Who has been lying on my bed?"

"And who has been lying on my bed?" said the Middle-sized Bear in her middle-sized voice.

"Who has been sleeping on my little bed, and lies here still?" cried the Tiny Wee Bear in his tiny wee voice.



NOW, when the Great Big Bear spoke, Goldilocks dreamed of a thunderstorm; and when the Middle-sized Bear spoke she dreamed that the wind was making the roses nod. But when the Tiny Wee Bear cried out she opened her eyes and was wide awake in a moment. She jumped up and ran to the window, and, before the three bears could catch her, she jumped out into the garden below. Then she ran through the wood as fast as she could, and never stopped till she reached home. And you may be sure she never went wandering into the wood again. So the Great Big Bear and the Middle-sized Bear and the Tiny Wee Bear ate their porridge in peace all the rest of their days.