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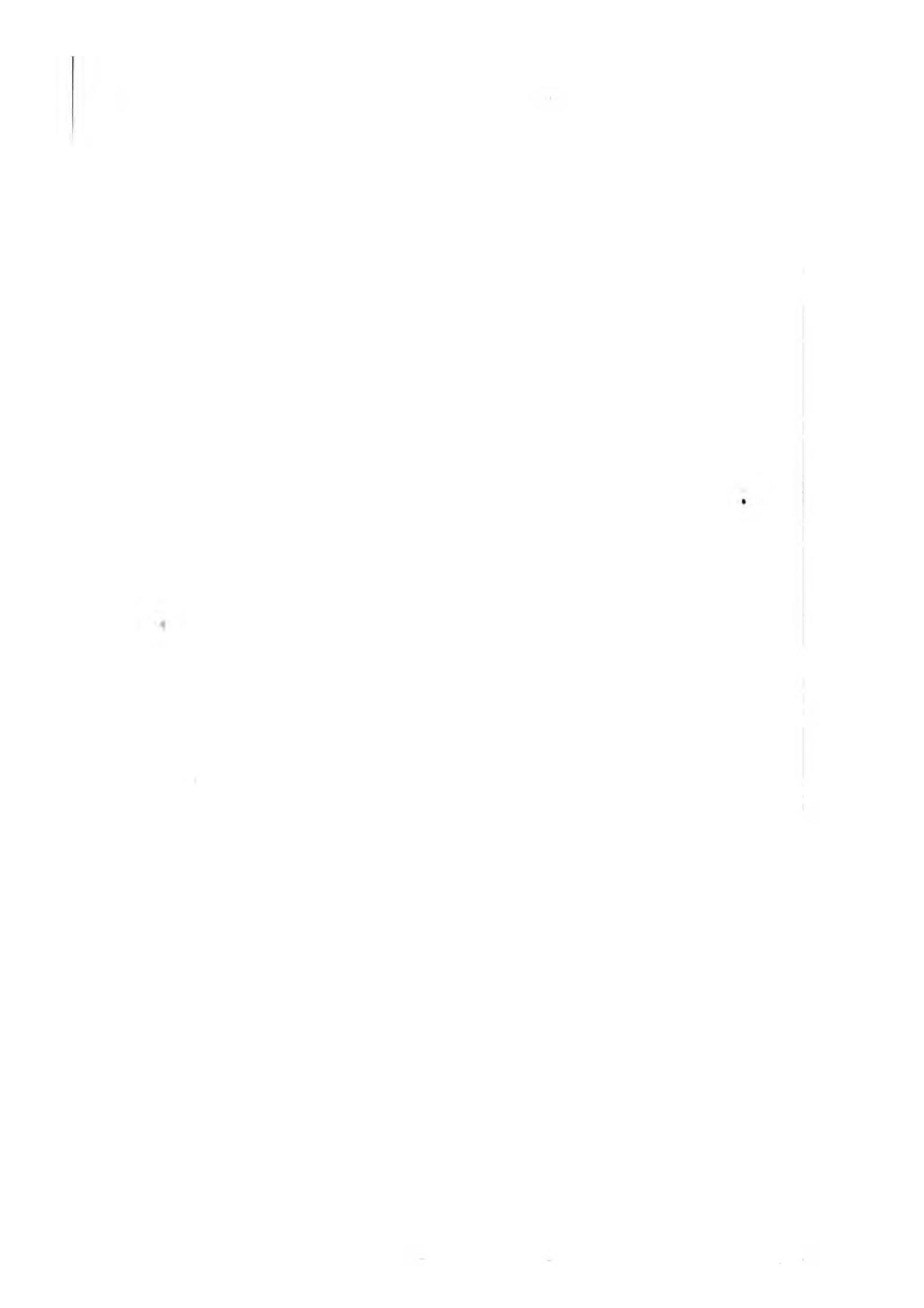
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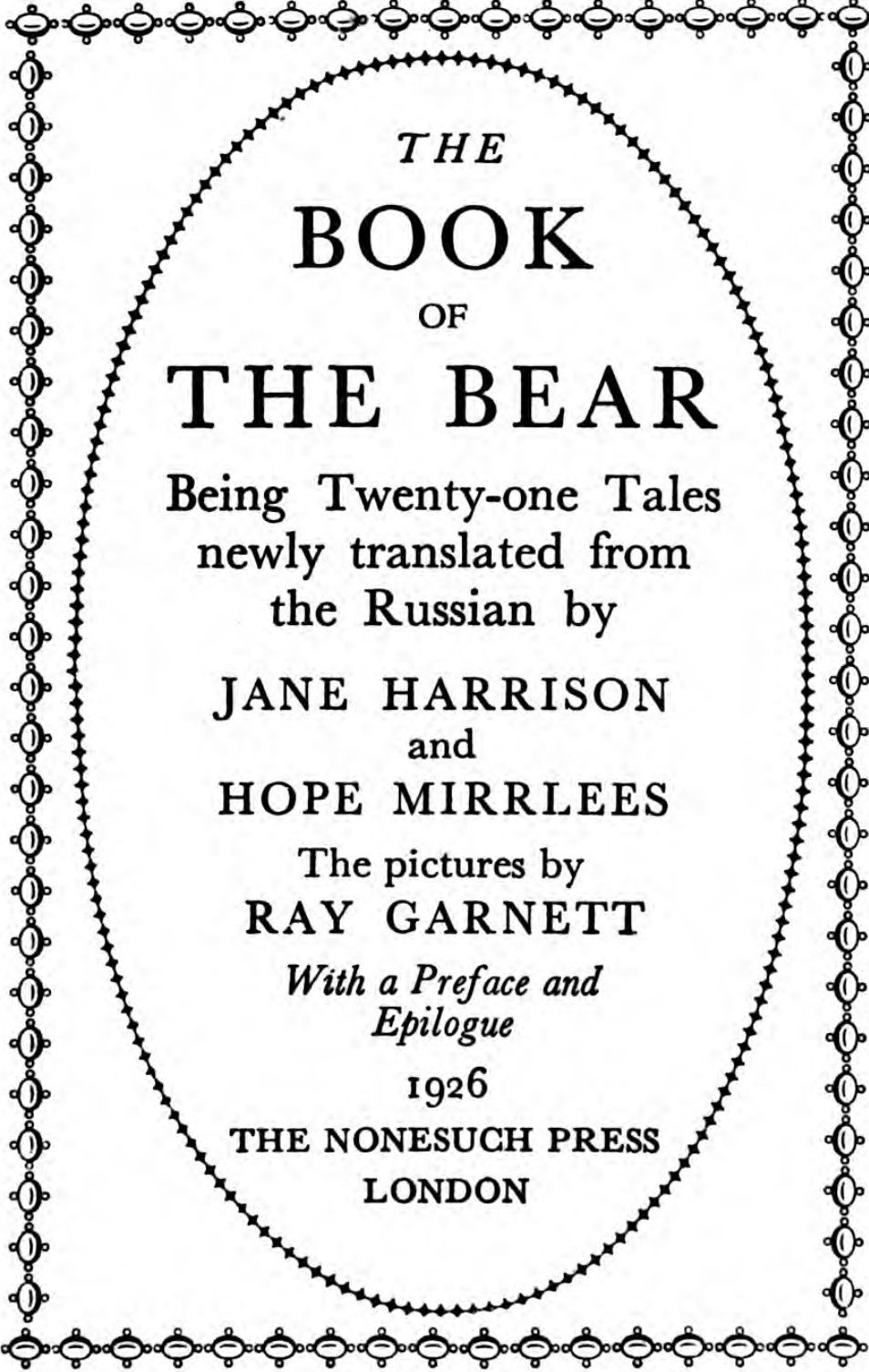
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THE
BOOK
OF
THE BEAR

Being Twenty-one Tales
newly translated from
the Russian by

JANE HARRISON
and
HOPE MIRRLEES

The pictures by
RAY GARNETT

*With a Preface and
Epilogue*

1926

THE NONESUCH PRESS
LONDON

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TO THE
G R E A T
B E A R

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THE
P R E F A C E

“THE bear is a shaggy, slothful, wild beast, in all respects like a man, and wishful to walk upright.”

So wrote an ancient Greek alchemist, and he touches, it seems, the secret of the bear's eternal appeal, he explains why this book has to be written: the bear is beast-like, he is wild and slothful and shaggy, but he is human also, “in all respects like a man” and—most touching of all—he is “wishful to walk upright.”

The bear is “in all respects like a man,” but there are many men—the stories here collected are with one exception all Russian, and in them the beast is seen as a true Russian, friendly, hospitable, cheery, the best of comrades, the worst of officials, tolerant of all social vices, pitiless only to the pretentious.

The one exception is the familiar tale of the Three Bears. We have given it here in Tolstoy's charming version, but the original
is

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is by Southey. In Southey's story the bears are just simple English bears, a little strange in their ways, but good bears who trust everybody and open their windows wide in the morning as good bears should. While, instead of a little girl, there is a bad, impudent old woman. The story has had the rare fate of becoming a folk-tale.

We might easily have added stories from other nations. Perhaps the finest of bear stories is from Sweden, told by Selma Lagerlöv—"God's Truce." In it the bear keeps the Truce of God, and the man, though he is a god-fearing man, breaks it. We were tempted to include this story for its sheer beauty, but it strikes a harsher and an alien note. The bear is a Swedish bear, upright, implacable; at the touch of sin his fur stiffens to granite. In the folk-tales and the fables of Krylov the bear is a Russian through and through. "The Dancing Bear" (by Chemnitzer, a predecessor of Krylov) commits the one sin for which the Russian has no tolerance—he "shows off," and for that he goes into piteous exile. In "The Hermit and the Bear" he is friendly and foolish. La Fontaine had already treated the subject, and the contrast between the two methods is marked. "The Industrious Bear" makes us ask whether, to Russian eyes, sheer industry

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dustry has not in it always something of "sound and fury." "The Bear and the Bees" shows a corrupt official, greedy, unscrupulous, unrepentant, but, as he sucks his honey-sweet paws, lovable always. In "The Bear's Dinner-party" he is hospitable, cheery, drunken.

Midway between the folk-lore tales which show the bear as the moujik's friend, and all but a moujik himself, and the fables of Krylov and the stories of Remizov, which are pure literature, stands the "Fragment of a *Bylina*" by Pushkin. A *Bylina* is a story of *What-has-been*. Pushkin here casts the tragedy of a bear's family life into the mould of the folk-epic. He borrows the easy rolling rhythm, the countless repetitions, the negative similes. "It was not the bells that were ringing."

This Bear-*Bylina* is a little masterpiece of woodland beauty and beast pathos.

Among contemporary Russian writers the only one we have laid under contribution is Alexey Michailovich Remizov.

Once, at a party in Paris, we introduced Remizov to a witty French woman. As he is almost unknown outside of Russia, his name conveyed nothing to her. "Who was it that you introduced to me?" she asked afterwards; "was it *Æsop*?"

The

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The question took our breath away; for the one word "Æsop"—Æsop, that little sly, twisted fabulist, wise in woodcraft, and a little uncanny, because dead for a thousand years—seemed the key to Remizov's significance and charm

Besides, since Æsop, nobody has written more deliciously about beasts (especially about bears) than Remizov. But, though his face may be Æsop's, he has green feet, like the "pied wood-sprites" he describes in the second story in this book, "ramping along on tiptoe on their velvet-green hind paws."

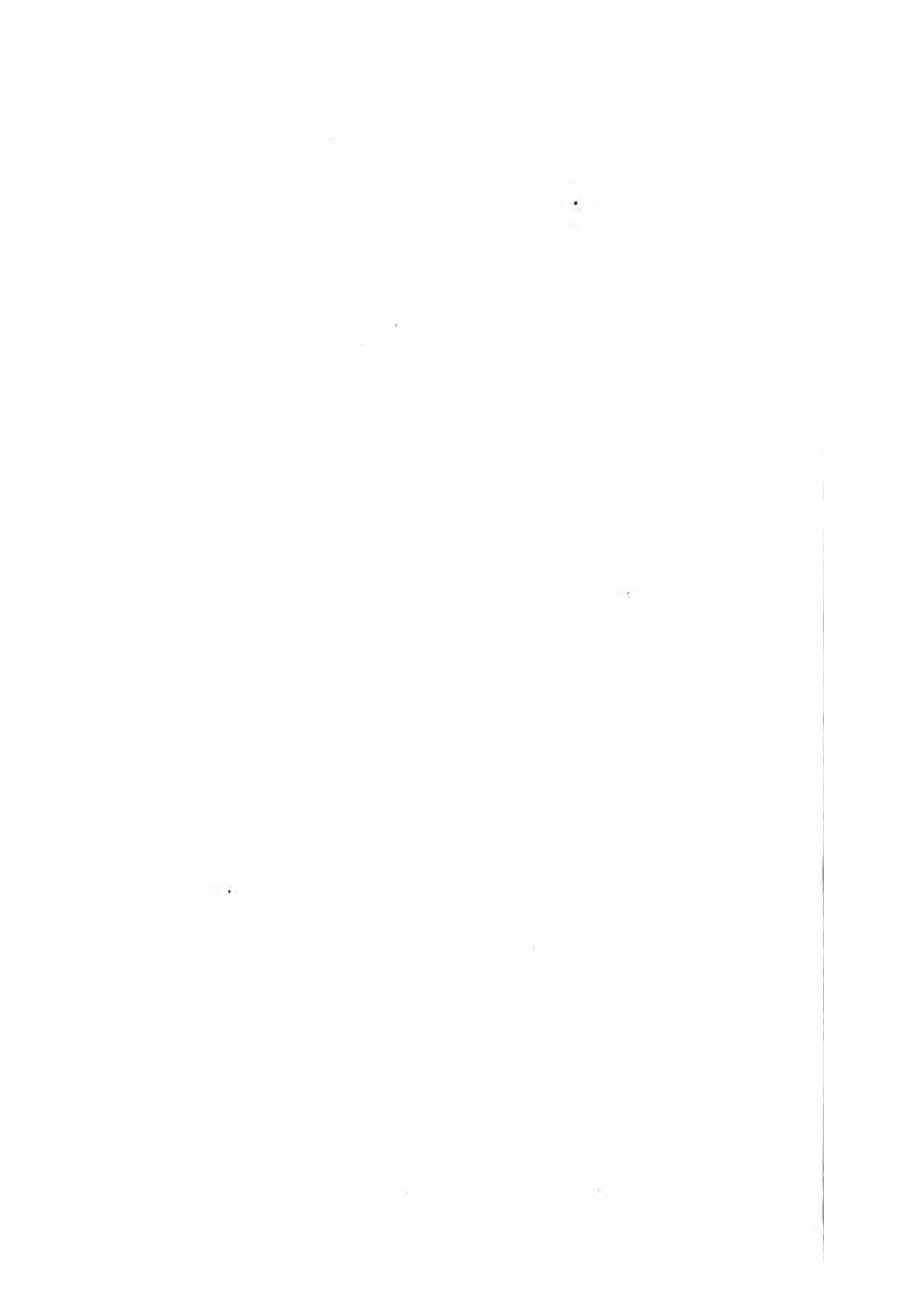
But Remizov is a far more cunning craftsman than Æsop, and when he chooses can do the most difficult thing in the world—write fables that have no moral.

Perhaps he learned the secret from the main source of his inspiration—folk-tales. Just as Mussorsky and Rimsky-Korsakov wove their modern music round folk-melodies, so Remizov has evolved his elaborate style and intensely individual fantasy from the simple rhythms of Russian folk-tales, and the foolish doings of their heroes.

Now, the sign-manual of a genuine folk-tale in its primitive state is that it has no moral, and this, perhaps, is one of the causes of its imbecility. For instance, could anything be more lacking in a moral and,
honesty



THE TALES





*THE BEAR AND THE CRANE
AND THE HORSE*

MY grandfather, Gregory Petrovitch, was a great hunter. He lived in the country in a house of his own. Near the house was a great courtyard and a big garden. The courtyard was more like a meadow than a courtyard, for it was all overgrown with grass, and through the grass there were only trodden footpaths leading to the icehouse and the stable and the barn. At the outside

BEAR, CRANE, AND HORSE

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side gates there was a dog on a chain and a bear-cub playing with him. Grandfather had caught the bear-cub himself. He had killed the mother-bear out hunting, and he brought home with him two bear-cubs. They were both, to begin with, fed out of a feeding-bottle, and my grandfather always saw to that himself. They lived under the front-steps where there was straw spread for them. But they were allowed to go anywhere they liked, in the courtyard and the garden and even in the rooms.

* * * * *

One day my grandfather had asked some friends to dinner; the servants were busy getting things ready and they had laid the table. When the table was all ready and there were only the chairs to arrange, the bear-cubs came scampering into the room, playing and turning somersaults. And then they began to shake the corners of the table-cloth. This pleased the cubs so much that they proceeded to catch on to the two ends and in a moment they had dragged the table-cloth off and all that was on it. All the crockery was smashed to bits and a fearful

BEAR, CRANE, AND HORSE

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ful crashing was heard all over the house. My grandfather and his visitors rushed to the dining-room and they found one of the bear-cubs standing on the broken crockery and looking at it with the greatest interest. But the other cub had gone away and was whimpering dolorously. My grandfather was going to punish them both, but he saw that the cub who was whimpering was all over blood. Towards evening he died, and there was only one cub left for grandfather. He made friends with the dog, crept into his kennel, took away his bones and never would let any one come near: he grabbed at the skirts of the serving-maid and he stole all sorts of tit-bits from the cook; he be-daubed the boot-boy with boot-polish and stole the boot-brushes and, in fact, behaved so disgracefully all round that they couldn't let him come into the house any more.

* * * * *

When winter came he had already grown a biggish bear, and the cook taught him to bring firewood into the kitchen. Michael Ivanovitch would collect a whole armful and walk along with it on his hind paws, but the

BEAR, CRANE, AND HORSE

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the horrid children, belonging to the farm peasants, would run up and pull his tail and he would fall backwards. The whole crew of them would run off into corners, but the bear would get up angrily and throw the firewood about. Then when he saw there was nothing to be done, he would pick the wood up and go on again until again they began pulling his tail.

Now if it chanced that while he was carrying the wood the cook pulled the bell to call people to dinner, he would start running, drop all the wood wherever he was, and make straight for the kitchen as fast as ever he could, on all four paws. And just the same, as soon as ever my grandfather would come into the yard, he dropped the wood and ran off to him to get petted.

* * * * *

So the winter went by, and by the next summer he had grown still bigger. The watch-dog was not so bold in playing with him and used to show his teeth at him. And all the people who came to the courtyard used to look at Michael Ivanovitch with fear.

Toward autumn my grandfather began to
go

BEAR, CRANE, AND HORSE

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go hunting: he went on horseback, and his horse not only was not afraid of Mishka but he was very fond of him, so that Mishka would get up on his hind-paws and sniff softly at the horse's head, and the horse would bend down and rub its head against Mishka. And they made Mishka a dog-collar and fastened a chain to it, and my grandfather would lead him on the chain when he went hunting. In the wood my grandfather would take off the chain and Mishka would scamper along in a friendly way by the horse's side.

* * * * *

One day in the summer, about the month of August, a peasant brought some game to sell and with the game he brought a young crane. The crane seemed to have been wounded and it could not fly. My grandfather bought the crane and tended it. When it was better, he fastened its wings and let it loose in the courtyard. The crane after a month was so bold that it would pay a visit to the kitchen and without by your leave or with your leave would take a look at the table and even into the cooking-stove.

If

BEAR, CRANE, AND HORSE

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If he found nothing in the kitchen, he would walk out, looking very important, to the dog-kennel and pick out bits of bread from the dish. The dog would generally growl at this, but Mishka always stood aside and made way for the crane's long beak. In winter they put the crane in the stable where my grandfather's hack lived, and the crane pecked oats out of the manger. My grandfather came to see the crane every day and always brought him a bit of something tasty to eat.

* * * * *

Well, so they went on, in peace and amity, until one day people came running to grandfather and told him that Mishka was up to his tricks and had injured a peasant. My grandfather flew out to the courtyard and ran to the front gates. Near the gates a peasant was lying: all round him were baskets and his face was covered with blood. He was lying on his face and Mishka was sitting near him. One of his paws was bloody and he was licking it. My grandfather looked at him, but Mishka's eyes were not malicious. We went up a little nearer
to

BEAR, CRANE, AND HORSE

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to Mishka and the whole thing was clear. The peasant was lying dead drunk and Michael Ivanovitch had smeared him all over with cranberry juice; and then he sucked his paw clear of the cranberry. He had crushed all the berries in the baskets. They shoved Mishka off and lifted the peasant up, and my grandfather began to think it over. Thank goodness, it had turned out all right *this* time, but some time or other, he said to himself, Mishka might really strangle somebody. During the next few days the bear had been up to such tricks that it really was necessary to put him on a chain.

They had just lit the stove in one of the rooms and the smoke, instead of going up through the chimney, all gushed out into the room. The chimney was open, but the smoke couldn't pass at all. My grandfather told them to climb up on the roof, and he himself went out into the courtyard. When he looked up to the roof it was clear enough what had happened. On the roof Mishka was sitting and he was clearly at work breaking up the second chimney. The one chimney was lying on the roof, already
smashed

BEAR, CRANE, AND HORSE

smashed to atoms. It seemed that Michael Ivanovitch was enjoying his work not a little, for spite of my grandfather's presence he went on breaking up the tiles so that a column of smoke came pouring out. My grandfather called him down but could not make him come, and he only scrambled down when it occurred to them to sound the dinner bell.

After this my grandfather saw that they could not let Michael Ivanovitch go loose; and so they cleared him out a stall in the stable. There the bear stayed on his chain which just allowed him to peep at the horse and to climb up the partition. When my grandfather went hunting, the bear would run by the horse's side, and the crane would not leave them but flew along on the other side of the horse. So it went on for a long time, more than a year.

* * * * *

One day they went far into the wood: my grandfather had been hunting, and had shot much game and was ready to go home: he called and called but there was no Mishka. He began to whistle; there was no answer. It

was

BEAR, CRANE, AND HORSE

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was late and there was nothing to be done, and my grandfather started home without Mishka. He had gone about a couple of versts when suddenly the horse began to snort and neigh. My grandfather stopped and whistled again, and there was Mishka galloping up to him as hard as he could. A week later they went hunting again. When they were ready to go home again—no Mishka. But this time my grandfather did not worry, but thought that Mishka would run after them later; he whistled and called and then set off. They waited some time on the road but Mishka never came. It was clear that he had taken it into his head to amuse himself in the wood. Grandfather got home and sent people to whistle in the wood. They came back, but without Mishka. The horse and the crane were desolate without him. They went on living in the stable, but Michael Ivanovitch was having a good time in the wood and getting to know his brothers.

* * * * *

A month went by. My grandfather went almost every day to look for Mishka in the wood but he never could find him.

He

BEAR, CRANE, AND HORSE

He had to go on business to the neighbouring town and stay there for about a month. He came back and a man said to him: "Some peasants have come from Babaev to ask if you would go on a bear-hunt. They say that the cubs have been up to such tricks that there's no bearing it. One bear all but came into the villages." At those words grandfather felt his heart sink. "When did they come," he asked, "was it long ago?"

"Yes, and they came again yesterday to tell you they were going to-day to try and surround the bears in the wood."

My grandfather was terribly upset; he mounted his hack and galloped off to Babaev.

* * * * *

He came to the village and asked:

"Have the peasants been gone long?"

"Yes, they started as soon as it was light."

My grandfather asked which wood they had gone to and hurried off in that direction. As he rode he heard one shot, then another, then some more. My grandfather pressed his horse on quicker and quicker.

And

BEAR, CRANE, AND HORSE

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And there they were, out in a forest-glade. The peasants had run round the wood to the glade with their guns, and at one end of the glade lay a bear who had been wounded in many places. My grandfather gave one look at him and all but fainted. It was his friend, Michael Ivanovitch. He had been hunting for my grandfather's house, and that was why he had been coming to the villages.

"Mishka," called out my grandfather, as well as he could.

The horse snorted and whinnied, and the crane flew up nearer and poor Mishka lifted up his head and groaned and began to heave himself up. My grandfather jumped from his horse and ran up to him. Mishka crawled up a few steps. But the blood was streaming from him. The peasants were horrified and screamed to grandfather to shoot. But grandfather, instead of shooting, threw down his gun and put his arms round his friend. Mishka couldn't keep on his feet any longer but tumbled over. My grandfather knelt down by him, and poor Mishka licked his hand and whimpered piteously and looked at all his old comrades, at the horse and at
the

BEAR, CRANE, AND HORSE

.....
the crane and at grandfather, and he looked
so wise he almost seemed to be speaking.
Then there was a rattle in his throat, and
he stretched himself and died.

HER STAR-BEAR

IN the middle of the night Alyónushka woke up.

It was stifling in the night nursery. Vlashevna, her Nannie, was snoring and breathing heavily. The little lamp that hung before the icons was burning low: the red flame would flicker up, and then die down.

And Alyónushka simply couldn't get off to sleep again: she was frightened and hot. She kept remembering things that had happened before she went to bed.

Daddy was late in getting home. I was going to bed and Daddy said: "Look, Alyónushka, there are falling stars in the sky." And Mummie and I stood for a long time looking out of the window. The stars were so tiny, and they were full of little gold drops of water, like in Mummie's brooch. It was cold at the window, we couldn't stand there long. And it's cold, too, when I go to early Mass with Daddy, and the bells ring, like at a funeral. Yesterday Vlashevna told me that she dreamt that Ivan Stepanovich, who died, caught hold of her with his hand.

There

HER STAR-BEAR

There are lots of stars in the sky, the stars are talking to each other, only we can't hear. Uncle Theodore Ivanich says that he sometimes feels as if he were flying to the stars, and at night he listens to them singing so so softly. There aren't any stars in the day, they sleep during the day. And I'd fly away too, if only I could get golden wings. And Daddy came up and said: "Alyónushka, there are falling stars!" And there was a gold ribbon burning a long time in the sky, and then it went out. It's cold for the poor little star, she's lying somewhere on the ground and crying—my poor little star!

Alyónushka felt this was so dreadful and was so sorry for the poor little star that her heart began to ache with pity.

"I'm thirsty, Nannie, I'm thi-i-irsty!"

And when Nannie Vlashevna gave her a mug of water, Alyónushka drank it up greedily, sticking out her little lips.

Then Alyónushka rolled herself up into a little round ball and fell asleep.

And it seemed to her that she was flying off somewhere to the stars, like Uncle Theodore Ivanich, and she came across little stars and they

HER STAR-BEAR

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they stretched out to her their little golden paws, then they hoisted her up on to their shoulders and whirled round with her, and the moon stroked her head and whispered in her ear:

“Alyónushka! *Alyónushka!* get up! The old sun’s wide awake, get up, Alyónushka!”

Alyónushka blinked her little eyes, and still it seemed as if she were flying to the stars like Uncle Theodore Ivanich.

“What’s the matter with you? Get up, quick!” It was Mummie—Mummie was bending over the crib and tickling her.

* * * * *

Alyónushka’s little star was a long time flying through the air, and, at last, it fell down into the heart of a wood, where the trees were thickest, where the firs intertwined their shaggy branches and made an eerie humming noise.

A thick blue-grey mist woke up and crawled across the sky, and the winter night was over.

And the sun, dressed in a scarlet cloak and a laced hat, came down from his crystal watch-tower.

Alyónushka’s little star was lying, all transparent,

HER STAR-BEAR

.....
parent, with melancholy blue eyes, on the soft pine needles, not far from a hare's form, and Jack Frost began to breathe on things.

And the old sun marched on and on, over the wood, and went home to his crystal watch-tower.

Snow clouds appeared and lay across the sky, and it began to grow dark.

In a trembling voice the grumbling wind struck up his old winter song.

The dumb snow-storm sprang up, and, dumb though she was, she shrieked.

The snow began to dance.

The poor little star was dozing by the hare's form, and the thaw of a little tear rolled down her star-cheek and then froze again.

And it seemed to her that once more she was flying round in the dancing chorus with her little golden friends, and they were so merry and laughed out loud, like Alyónushka. And the cloudy night—an old Nannie, like Vlasyevna—was taking care of them.

* * * * *

The blinds were being pulled up.

All day Alyónushka stood by the open window. Strange people were walking past, furniture-movers

HER STAR-BEAR

furniture-movers were jogging along, and look! a waggon is crawling past, piled up with mattresses and tables and beds.

“That means that somebody is off to the country!” decided Alyónushka. The sky was blue and clear, and the sky smiled at Alyónushka.

“Mummie! I say, Mummie! When are *we* going to the country?” she kept asking.

“We’ll get ready, darling, and pack up everything and go off far away, farther than last summer!” said Mummie: Mummie was making Alyónushka a dressing-gown, and she was busy.

“Oh! if only we could go quickly!” teased Alyónushka.

She couldn’t as much as look at her toys—they were so wooden and dull. The toys, too, had had enough of winter.

What a long time it takes them to lay the table! And the plates clatter. What a long time they take over their dinner! Alyónushka wasn’t hungry.

Then Uncle Theodore Ivanich arrived, and he and Mummie chatted about this and that, and he laughed and teased Alyónushka.

But

HER STAR-BEAR

But Alyónushka prowled about the room and looked out of the window, and was cross and contrary, and she had a pain in her tummy.

They wouldn't let her sit up for Daddy, but put her to bed.

And through her dreams Alyónushka heard Daddy and Mummie and Uncle Theodore Ivanich, who were having tea in the dining-room, talking about going away to the country to a great dreaming wood, where there were trees growing even in the house, and growing on the roof. *That* was something like a wood!

Alyónushka's head began to turn. She saw before her a huge green Christmas-tree brightly lighted with different coloured little candles and hung with cracker-jewellery and sugar biscuits, and the Christmas-tree was bearing down on her, and in the dark corners there were lurking white and black bears with golden collars and tambourines and drums, and round the bears little golden stars were tumbling and flying.

"But where is she? Where's my own little star?" cried Alyónushka, suddenly remembering

HER STAR-BEAR

bering her. "Uncle Theodore said she would turn into a little girl like me, or else into a little beast. What sort of little beast, I wonder?"

"Well, Alyónushka, how's your tummy?" It was Daddy. He had come softly in and was leaning over her and making the sign of the Cross over her.

"No-o-o!" whined Alyónushka who was only half awake.

"Get well quickly, darling, and we'll go to the country to-morrow, and there are such high mountains there and such dreaming woods!"

Alyónushka turned round on her other side, hugged her pillow tight, tight, and fell asleep.

* * * * *

It seemed as if the whirlwinds were suddenly hushed and the rivers in flood began to doze.

The buds began to swell, and here and there peeped out the first silky baby-leaves.

The granite-grey feathery tendrils of the stag-moss began to trail with greenness. The pied wood-sprites began to ramp along on tiptoe

.....
"A bird's nest!" he said to himself.

But the light flared up; the voices chattered.

The little bear pushed the branches apart and saw a huge lighted hall full of monstrous hunters. The hunters were eating and talking gibberish.

"Listen, Alyónushka," Mummie was saying, "don't go in the wood by yourself. There are bears there and they'll eat you up. Uncle Theodore Ivanich met a little one the other day when he was out shooting—a tiny one, no bigger than you!"

"Oh Daddy, Daddy!" cried Alyónushka, delighted, "catch that little bear for me, and I'll play with him!"

But the little bear, when he heard, began to growl and out he came.

"Look, look!" shrieked Mummie, "*there* he is, the little bear!"

Whereupon they all sprang up from the table, and Daddy spilt all the soup.

"Come here, little bear! Come and have supper with us, dear little bear!" cried Alyónushka, jumping up and down. The little bear came up and sniffed; and he was
greatly

HER STAR-BEAR

.....
greatly pleased with the little white girl. Alyónushka was greatly pleased with the little bear. She made him sit down beside her, and stroked his little snout and stuffed bread up his nose. He looked lovingly into her clear little eyes and sniffed; he was so tired and frightened.

“There now! You’ve got a little bear of your own and you can play with him. But you must go off to bed now, you’re up too late as it is.”

“And can he come with me?” Alyónushka asked timidly.

“No, indeed! Go off by yourself. Daddy will tie him to a bush.”

Then Mummie began to scold Daddy about the soup, and Alyónushka, trying hard not to cry, went up alone to the nursery.

For a long time she couldn’t get to sleep, because she was thinking so much about the little bear, and how they would walk in the wood together and gather berries. They would be frightened of no one because, when you have a bear with you, nobody will eat you up.

“Little bear, my own dear little bear, poor little
little

HER STAR-BEAR

.....
little bear!" whispered Alyónushka; and fell asleep.

* * * * *

As soon as Alyónushka was awake, she would run straight off to the little bear, and unfasten him from the bush, and there was no end to the pranks that she would play with him: she would hug him, she would put an old hat of Daddy's on his head, she would get on to his back, or lead him about by the paw and talk to him.

The little bear understood everything, only he couldn't talk, he could only growl.

So the days slipped by.

The little bear was happy when he was with Alyónushka, but when he was tied up he would begin to mope and remember the birds and all the different kinds of beasts.

Autumn came; the nights began to be cold. They would even from time to time light the stoves.

The little bear heard Daddy and Mummie talking about the journey home, and Alyónushka took his paw and stroked it, and kissed his little snout.

"Soon you'll be left all alone," she said to
him.

HER STAR-BEAR

him. "Daddy and Mummie don't want to take you with us, because you'll begin biting soon."

That day Mummie told her not to be too much with the little bear.

"Just think! Daddy stroked your pet and he snapped at his nose!"

"I think I'd better make for the wood, else they'll be killing me!" the little bear said to himself. But he felt sad and sore and depressed about leaving Alyónushka.

They were getting ready to leave.

In the evening there were visitors, and Mummie played on the piano.

When Uncle Theodore began to sing, the little bear began to howl an accompaniment from his bush. And suddenly he became savage and, bursting through his collar, rushed straight into the hall.

They were all as terrified as if the house were on fire, and all flung themselves upon the little bear. When they had caught him, he snapped at Mummie's finger, and everybody began to shriek.

"My darling little bear, don't touch him!" howled Alyónushka.

But

HER STAR-BEAR

.....
But they tied him up and dragged him away.

“What are you going to do to my darling little bear?” sobbed Alyónushka, sticking out her little pouting lips.

Nannie Vlasyevna tried to comfort her: “It’s all right, dearie, they’ll let him free in the wood, and it’ll be nicer for him there. Go to sleep, Alyónushka, we’re going home to-morrow and I’m sure your toys have been missing you!”

“I don’t want my toys. My own darling little be-e-ear! You’re all of you horrid and nasty and unki-i-i-nd!”

Her little face was scarlet and the tears were raining down.

* * * * *

The myriad silver-wrought autumn stars softly flew, were poured, over the sky.

The moon went off somewhere.

The branches crackled. The leaves flew away, and they made a muffled noise.

“The little bear’s coming; hide, quick!” cried the birds and the beasts one after the other.

Noisily pushing apart the branches, out came

HER STAR-BEAR

.....
arched his back and, with a voluptuous yawn, sprang on to Alyónushka's crib.

Alyónushka blinked her sleepy little eyes: was it the little bear flinging himself upon her to eat her up?

And where was Nannie Vlasyevna?

From the kitchen came the sound of people moving and a dull sort of thud.

The cat rolled up his paws, stretched out his little whiskered fizz, and raised his voice in song.

There was nothing frightening now.

"Oh dear!" said Alyónushka to herself, "if only Christmas would come quick and then Easter! I'll go to early Mass. Easter is lovely!"

The little lips, still pouted from sleep, relaxed, and her face became radiant and she smiled as if at that very moment the Three Kings were arriving with the star, dragging a huge Christmas-tree, covered with sugar biscuits.



THE BEAR'S DINNER-PARTY

MISHKA a dinner planned.
He invited to his feast
Not bears alone but many another beast,
Whoever came to hand.
A birthday was it or a funeral?
The bear got honour from the festival.
Mishka himself set things a-going,
'Twas Mishka kept the wine a-flowing,
Passed the dessert, called toasts, sang songs
galore.
The dinner over, Mishka took the floor.

Upon

THE BEAR'S DINNER-PARTY

.....
Upon the light fantastic toe
Mishka began to dance. And "Oh
"How lovely," squeaked the fox; her paws
She clapped in loud applause.

"What grace! What manly vigour!
"How light his step! How slim his figure!"

An old grey wolf was sitting near;
He growled into her ear
For all to hear:

"Just stop that nonsense, vixen, for our
host

"Is lurching like a drunken post."

"'Tis true," she said,
And hung her head,

"And yet, my timely acclamation
"Brings Mishka after-dinner exaltation,
"And us—perchance—a supper invitation."

THE BEARS

THE hapless gypsies in four counties had come together with all their goods and chattels, and with them bears. There were more than a hundred wild creatures with their crooked paws, from small bear-cubs to huge old bears with their fur growing grey and falling off, and they were collected together on the town common. The gypsies were waiting with horror for the appointed day. Many of them, who had been the first to come, had been waiting on the town common a whole week. The government was waiting the arrival of all those gypsies who were on the list for a certain date, in order to carry out at one moment a great execution. The gypsies had been given five years' grace since the issue of the enactment which was to put an end to the business in tame bears. And now the day of grace was over. The gypsies had to present themselves at certain places appointed for collecting the bears together, and there they themselves had to put their nurslings to death. But for the moment, in the camp where the gypsies were

THE BEARS

.....
were collected together, all was quiet. One by one they had put out the useless lights: the bears fumbled about, rattled with their chains and, from time to time, they would give a low growl from under the carts to which they were tied up. The gypsies lay down to sleep.

* * * * *

The day dawned, murky and cold, a real September morning. A few drops of thin rain had fallen, but in spite of this many spectators, both men and women, young and old, had come to the meadow to look on at the interesting sight. The town was almost deserted. In the camp there was but little noise: the women, with the little children, were hiding in the tents that they might not see the execution, and only now and again from one or another there would break out a wail of despair. The men were feverishly finishing the final preparations. They wheeled the carts out to the edge of the camp and fastened the wild beasts to them. The bears were not feeling quite at ease. The unwonted halt, the strange preparations, the huge crowd, and the fact that they them-

selves

THE BEARS

.....
selves were all herded up together in one place—all this made them feel uncomfortable and excited. From time to time they would shake their chains and gnaw at them and give low growls. Old Ivan was standing by the side of his huge one-eyed bear. His son, an elderly gypsy with a few silver-grey hairs among his black locks, and the grandson, all deadly pale and with burning eyes, were tying up the bear.

“Come, old man,” said the inspector, “tell your young men to set to.” There was a movement among the onlookers, a murmur of voices, cries, but soon all was quiet again, and out of the death-like stillness was heard a voice, not loud but solemn. It was the old man, Ivan, speaking:

“Good master, let me say my say. I ask you, my brother, let me be the first to make an end. I am the oldest of you all. Another year and I shall be ninety. From the time I was a little one I have been leading bears. And in the whole camp there is no bear who is older than mine.” The curly grey head sank on his breast; he shook it bitterly and wiped his eyes with his fist. Then he drew himself

THE BEARS

himself up, lifted his head and went on, louder and more firm than before.

“This is why I want to be the first to make an end. I thought I should not live to see such sorrow. I thought my beloved bear would not live either—for this is not fate. I must kill him with my own hand, him who has brought me food and been my benefactor. Untie him, let him go free. He will not go away—he and I, old ones both, we shall not run away from death. Untie him, Bacya. I will not kill him tied up like a brute beast. Don’t be frightened,” said he to the crowd which began murmuring, “he won’t touch any one.”

* * * * *

The young man untied the huge creature and led him a little away from the cart. The bear sat down on his hind paws and dropped his front paw and moved his head from side to side, breathing heavily and hoarsely. It was clear enough that he was very old; his teeth were yellow—his fur was rusty and coming off. With his one small eye he looked at his old master with a friendly pathetic look. All round there was silence like death.

“Give

THE BEARS

“Give me the gun,” said the old man firmly.

His son gave him the rifle. He took it and, pressing it against his breast, began to speak again, turning to the bear.

“In a moment I shall kill you, old Trampler. God grant that my old hand may not tremble and that the bullet may go straight to your heart. I would not give you pain; you haven’t deserved that, my old bear, my good comrade. I took you when you were a small bear-cub; your eye had been put out and your nose was sore with the ring; you were ill and like to die. I pitied you and looked after you like a son, and you grew up a big strong bear—there’s not another like you in all the camps together. And you grew up and never forgot my kindness—among men I had no friend like you. You were good and gentle and understanding, and you learnt everything, and I never saw a better creature nor a more understanding one. What should I have been without you? All my family lived on your earnings. You got me two pairs of these horses; you provided me with a hut for winter. And you did more than

THE BEARS

.....
he cried, in a fierce stifled voice, his eyes blazing. "Enough! kill him, brothers, and have an end to it."

And running close up to the bear he laid the muzzle against his ear and fired.

Shots resounded through the whole camp, deadened by the despairing wail of the women and children.

FRAGMENT OF A BYLINA

IN the springtime, the warm time, the soft
time,

Just before the white hour of the dawning
From the forest, the forest a-dreaming,
There came forth a brown bear, a great she-
bear

With her children, her little ones, bear-cubs,
To see and be seen and to gambol.

And the she-bear sat down 'neath a birch-
tree,

And the bear-cubs they played with each
other,

With each other they rolled and they
tumbled.

And—from heaven knows where—came a
peasant,

In his hands was a spear for his hunting,
At his belt hung a knife for the flaying,
And a sack it hung down from his shoulders.

When the she-bear was ware of the peasant
With his spear, then she roared, did the she-
bear,

And straightway she called to her children,
To

FRAGMENT OF A BYLINA

To those foolish ones, thoughtless young
bear-cubs:

“Oh my children, my bear-cubs, my little
ones,

“Stop fooling and somersaults turning,

“Stop your fondling, take shelter behind me.

“That peasant shall never get at you,

“That peasant, I’ll eat out his belly.”

The bear-cubs were frightened, so frightened,

They all rushed behind their bear-mother.

But the she-bear was terribly angry,

In her wrath she rose up on her hind-paws.

But that peasant knew what she was after,

With his spear he rushed straight on the
she-bear,

And he struck her just over her navel,

And the she-bear fell down on the damp
earth.

And the peasant ripped open her belly,

And stripped off her hide from the she-bear,

And into his sack put the bear-cubs.

And he shouldered his sack and went home-
wards.

“Ho my wife, here! for you a fine present,

“Here’s a bear-coat that’s worth fifty
roubles,

“And

FRAGMENT OF A BYLINA

“And here too’s another fine present,
“Here are bear-cubs and each worth five
roubles.”

It was not the bells that were ringing
Thro’ the town, ’twas the news they were
bringing
Thro’ the wood to the bear, to the black one
That a peasant had slaughtered his she-bear,
And into the sack put the bear-cubs.
The bear hung his head in dejection
And lifted his voice in lamenting
For his lady, his love, his brown she-bear.
“Oh my love, oh my life, my brown she-
bear,
“Oh why hast thou left me, bereft me,
“A widower disconsolate left me?
“Nevermore shall we two play together,
“Nevermore shalt thou bear me sweet bear-
cubs,
“Nevermore in my arms shall I toss them,
“And rock them, and sing them to slumber.”

Then the wild beasts all gathered together,
To the Bear, to their Lord and their Master.
And together the big beasts came running,
And



THE BEAR AND THE DOG

ONCE upon a time there was a great dog who lived with a peasant in a village. And the dog grew so old that he couldn't bark and guard the yard and the outhouses any more. The peasant didn't want to have to feed the dog and he chased him away from the yard. The dog went off to the wood and lay down under a tree to die. Suddenly a bear came up and asked:

“Dog, what are you lying down here for?”

“I came here to die of hunger. You know nowadays

THE BEAR AND THE DOG

nowadays this is the sort of justice that is among men. As long as you have strength, they give you food and drink, but when you lose your strength from old age, why, they chase you away from the yard!"

"And what is the matter, Dog? Do you want to eat?"

"Eat? I should think I just do!"

"Well, come along with me, I will give you plenty to eat." And they went off together.

They chanced to meet a horse.

"Look at me," said the bear to the dog, and began to grub up with his paws in the earth.

"Dog—good Dog."

"Well, what is it?"

"Just look, are my eyes red?"

"Yes, Bear, they are red." The bear began to grub up the earth still more fiercely.

"Dog, good Dog, is my fur standing on end?"

"Yes, Bear, your fur is standing on end."

"Dog, good Dog, is my tail standing up?"

"Yes, your tail's standing up."

And the bear seized the horse by the belly, and the horse fell down to the ground.

"Come

THE BEAR AND THE DOG

“Look, look,” said the women, “an old dog has saved the baby.”

They ran to meet him. The mother was glad, oh so glad.

“Now,” said she, “never for anything in the world will I desert that dog.”

She took him home with her, poured out ever so much milk, crumbled bread and gave it to the dog.

“There, eat that.”

And she said to her husband:

“Look here, old man, we must look after our dog and feed him. He has saved my baby from a bear, but you, you said he had no strength.” The dog got well and strong and got fat.

“God bless the bear,” said he, “for he did not let me die of hunger.” And he became the bear’s best friend.

One day the peasant gave an evening party. The bear and the dog were among the guests.

“How do you do, Dog—how are you? Do you get bread to eat?”

“God be praised,” answered the dog, “it’s not only bread, but bread and butter! What can

THE BEAR AND THE DOG

.....
can I get you to eat? Let's go into the cottage. Our hosts are amusing themselves and haven't seen that you have come, but come in, and creep in quickly near the stove and I'll get you whatever I can to eat and drink."

So they went into the cottage. The dog saw that the guests and the hosts had drunk, first one and then the other, and it was time to feast his friend. The bear drank a glass or two and began to get lively. The guests set up a song and the bear wanted to sing too. He began a song of his own, but the dog begged him not to.

"Don't sing; if you do, mischief will come of it."

No good, the bear would not be quiet, but sang his own song all the louder. The guests heard the noise and they seized sticks and began to beat the bear. He roared and ran off, and hardly got away with his life.

THE BEAR'S LULLABY

HUSH-A-BYE, hush-a-bye, baby bears
—bye-bye.

With your crooked paws—bye-bye.

With your shaggy jaws—bye-bye.

Father gone a-honey hunting—bye-bye.

Mother picking berries ripe,

Berries ripe for baby bunting—bye-bye.

Daddy bringing honey-comb. Hush-a-bye
—bye-bye.

Mummy bringing berries home. Hush-a-bye
—bye-bye.

For the mighty stag, for the bear,

Some one in the wood hangs a cradle there
—bye-bye.

Mighty heroes keep

Watch and never sleep—bye-bye.

Not for them the lullaby,

Not for them the hush-a-bye. Bye-bye—
hush-a-bye.

Медведь жья колыбельная пьеса

Ба - ю бай-бай, мед-ведь-дѣ-вы дѣт-ки ба-ю бай-бай, ко-со-
ла - ны да мох-ня-ты, бай-бай

Баю бай-бай, медведёвы дѣтки, - баю бай-бай,
Косолапы да мохнатые, бай-бай.

Батя медъ ушелъ искать, - баю бай-бай,
Мама ягоды собирает, бай-бай.

Батя тащитъ соты-меды, - баю бай-бай,
Мама эгожок лукошко, бай-бай.

Кто оленюшкѣ, кто медведюшкѣ, - баю бай-бай,
Въ лѣсъ колыбель пѣлъсилъ, бай-бай

Вышли воины црале, - баю бай-бай,
Небаюканы, немялюканы, бай-бай

Л. Э. Жиринский

Основа пьесы - древняя латвийская.

Когда я писал "Посолю" мнѣ приснился; весь закованный подходил
онъ ко мнѣ и я слышалъ, какъ въ стукъ шатовъ его напѣвалась ко-
лыбельная пьеса, медведь жья. Мотивъ для этой Колыбель-
ной пьесы запомнился мнѣ изъ моего сна.

THE HERMIT AND THE BEAR

“**A** FRIEND in need is a friend indeed,”
But the man with a fool for his friend,
Him may God defend—for he
Is worse than an enemy.

There was a lonely man, friendless and
fatherless,
Far from men’s haunts dwelt he in the lonely
wilderness.

Write as you will about the joys of hermits’
lives,

It isn’t every man in such conditions thrives.
To share some pleasure or some painful thing
Sometimes, ’tis comforting.

They tell me of the joys of little hills,
Dark groves, green grass meadow and trick-
ling rills.

Yes, true enough, they’re beauteous one and
all,

But if one never speaks a single word
To no one, well, they’re apt to pall.

Our hermit always left alone
With boredom soon began to groan,

And

THE HERMIT AND THE BEAR

And thro' the wood in search of neighbours,
He strolled about—but vain his labours,
To saunter thro' the wood, who cares
Save wolves and bears?

And sure enough—there came to meet him
there

A great big bear.

What could he do? Why, only that

He did—take off his hat,

Bow low to his new friend. That friend did
more,

He straight held out a shaggy paw,

And bit by bit they got to know each other

And were like brother unto brother.

It came to this, they could not bear to part,

They spent whole days together, heart to
heart.

But what they talked about,

What jokes they cracked, what tales they told

I never could find out,

For as I live

The hermit was a silent man,

Mishka by nature was not talkative.

Well anyhow, great was the hermit's pleasure

That God had given him so great a treasure,

To

THE HERMIT AND THE BEAR

.....
To be his friend; on Mishka's ways
He hung and could not speak enough in
Mishka's praise.

If he and Mishka were apart,
Then he fell sick of head and heart.

The sun was shining one hot day,
The friends planned all day long to stray
O'er hill and dale an endless way.
But since a man is always weaker
Than is a bear, our hermit found
That he was sooner tired than Mishka.

And so

His step grew slow,
He faltered and he lagged behind.
His helpful friend was kind.
Our Mishka was all readiness
To give him ease in his distress.
"Lie down a bit," he said, "and sleep
"At leisure; I my watch will keep."
Such good advice could not be scorned,
The hermit laid him down and yawned,
And fell asleep.

And Mishka watch did keep.
Mishka had small repose,
For on the hermit's nose

A

THE HERMIT AND THE BEAR

.....
A fly sat down. He flapped the fly away,
But back it came, to his dismay,
Down on the hermit's neck importunate.

Mishka was irate,
Was nettled.
No word our Mishka said,
But from its grassy bed
Grubs up a mighty paving stone.
Crouching, he holds it in his paws and thinks,
"I'll make you hold your tongue, you tedious
minx."

The fly was perching now
On his friend's brow.
With all his might and main
Mishka banged down the stone, and not in
vain.
Mishka his watch did keep,
Long did his poor friend sleep.

THE BEAR AND THE COCK

AN old woman had a fool-son. The fool asked his father to get him a wife.

“If you don’t, I will break the stove to bits.”

“How can I get you a wife? We have no money.”

“We have no money but there’s the ox. Sell him for meat.”

The ox heard them and made off for the wood. The fool again came bothering to his father:

“Get me a wife or I will break the stove to bits.”

The father said:

“I’d be glad enough to get you a wife but we’ve no money.”

“We’ve no money, but there’s the sheep. Sell him for mutton.”

The sheep heard them and made off for the wood. The fool kept on at his father:

“Get me a wife, that’s all I want.”

“I tell you we’ve no money.”

“We’ve no money, but there is the cock. Wring his neck, make a pie of him, and sell it.”

The cock heard them and flew off to the wood.

THE BEAR AND THE COCK

wood. The ox and the sheep and the cock all met together, and they built a little hut for themselves in the wood. The bear got to know of this and he wanted to eat them up, so he came to the hut. The cock caught sight of him and jumped up on his perch—he flapped his wings and crowed:

“Cock-a-doodle-doo! What a to-do—to-do!
Bring me a chopper—bang!
Bring me a rope, to hang
Cock-a-doodle-doo! Whata to-doo—to-doo!”

The bear was frightened and went off without looking back; off he ran and ran and fell down in a fright and died. The fool came into the wood, found the bear, stripped off his hide and sold it, and with the money he got a wife; for the fool, the ox, and the sheep, and the cock came back home from the wood.

THE INDUSTRIOUS BEAR

A PEASANT earned his livelihood
By bending yokes of stubborn wood.

Mishka, a most industrious bear,
Was standing there,
And to himself he said:
“I, too, will earn my daily bread
“And profits rich in money
“For buying honey.”
And then began a-crashing,
A-bashing and a-smashing,
Of fir and elm and oak.

The echoes of the forest woke,
But Mishka never bent a yoke.
Disgruntled in his heart,
Hanging his furry head,
“Tell me the secret of your art,”
He to the peasant said.
The peasant answered back:
“A yoke to bend
“Needs, just the thing you lack,
“Patience, my friend.”



THE PEASANT AND THE BEAR

A PEASANT and a bear had made great friends. They made a plan to sow turnips. They sowed the turnips and began to discuss how they should divide them. The peasant said:

“I will have the roots and you, Mishka, shall have the tops.”

The turnips sprouted and grew. The peasant took the roots and Mishka got the tops. Mishka saw he had blundered and said to the peasant:

“My
I

THE PEASANT AND THE BEAR

“Don’t be frightened, Uncle. He’ll not eat you.”

And the fox herself went into the bushes, but she bade the peasant stay where he was: then she came out from the bushes and asked:

“Peasant, are there any fierce wolves here, any bears?”

And the bear came up to the peasant and said:

“O peasant, say there are none and I won’t eat you.”

And the peasant said to the fox:

“There are none!”

The fox burst out laughing, and said:

“But what is that lying near the cart?”

And the bear whispered to the peasant:

“Say it’s a log!”

“But if it were a log,” said the fox, “it would be tied on to the cart.”

And she ran off again into the bushes. And the bear said to the peasant:

“Tie me up and put me in the cart.”

The peasant did so. And back came the fox and asked the peasant:

“Peasant, haven’t you got something there?”

“No,

THE PEASANT AND THE BEAR

“No, nothing.”

“But there is something lying in the cart?”

“It’s a log.”

“If it were a log, there would be an axe in it.”

And the bear whispered to the peasant:

“Stick an axe into me.”

And the peasant struck an axe into his backbone, and the bear breathed his last.

THE TWO FRIENDS

STEPHEN and Peter were walking through a wood, and suddenly they saw a bear. Stephen set off to run and climbed up a tree. But Peter stayed on the road. What was he to do? He fell down on the ground and pretended he was dead.

The bear came up to him and began to sniff round. Peter held his breath. The bear took him for a dead man and went off. Then Stephen climbed down from the tree and asked:

“What was the bear saying in your ear?”

“The bear was saying: ‘What a good-for-nothing friend you have; he left you in your danger.’ ”

COLONEL BRUIN

'T WAS getting dark one evening,
Smart frost was in the air.
Along the road between the posts
Returning home, a pair
Of post-boys slacked. "No hurry now,
"Our bags are good and strong,
"The road is rough, the ruts are deep."
And so they jogged along.
And as they went, they came up with
A leader and a bear.
"Give us a lift, good fellows,"
He cried—"and we'll get there,
"The lot of us, more cheerily." "What,
Mishka?" "Yes, for he's a friendly
bear—
"As kind as kind—an extra glass for him.
"I'll treat you to an extra glass and fill it to
the brim."
"Now in you get." The bearded man put
Mishka in all right,
Sat down himself, but Thedya, he was seized
with sudden fright.
Trephon he spied a pub and there Thedya
he did invite,

But

COLONEL BRUIN

.....
"Clear, clear the way," the people cried,
"for all is rack and ruin;

"Clear, clear the way, he's driving home,
himself, our Colonel Bruin!"

And every peasant shook for fear, and every
good wife bowed her.

The shaggy driver at each jolt he only roared
the louder;

And terror seized the horses' hearts, and
stricken, hunted, heaving,

They tore along for fifteen verst and never
stopped for breathing.

* * * * *

Straight her way the gallant sledge with a
dash is taking

To the post-house. Passenger sits his head
a-shaking,

Wants to twist his nose-ring out, vain is all
his cunning.

Halts the sledge, th' inspector comes, all
agog and running,

Sees the bear-skin coat, the boots; but he
fails to notice,

Hasty man, just this,—a ring in the coach-
man's nose is.

Sees

COLONEL BRUIN

.....
Sees a lusty Barin there, post-boy never misses,
Never thinks, but "sure enough that's the
Colonel" guesses.

Hurries up, and hat in hand begs to greet
his worship,

"Will he tea or brandy take? Can he serve
his lordship?"

While the old man hurries up, briskly plies
his business,

Mishka roars a great bear-roar. "God in
Heaven help us!"

Cries the inspector. "On the road many a
gallant Colonel

"Forty years long have I seen. One in such a
passion,

"Holy Moses! ne'er I saw. He's the newest
fashion!"

* * * * *

Post-boys up they run amazed, and they cry
out "Damme,

"All is not as it should be, something's not
quite canny!"

All the people crowding round, what a
hurly-burly,

Like a bear within his cave growls the
Colonel surly.

Off

COLONEL BRUIN

.....
Off one coward ran, but one, feeling some-
what bolder,
(Others just for fun), ran up, shoulder pressed
to shoulder.

But the inspector stayed behind safely at a
distance.

“Pray come in, good sir,” he cried, cried
with much persistence.

Mishka he roared loud and long. Then the
inspector trembled,

Off he ran, and with him ran all his folk
assembled.

And the angry Colonel lay in the sledge
a-grunting,

Two hours long; then up they came, both of
them a-hunting,

Bear-leader and post-boy too, and his ex-
planation

Bearded Trephon gave the folk—gone their
trepidation!

With a cudgel from the sledge, he our Mishka
shunted,

And th’ inspector with a curse post-boy much
affronted.

THE DANCING BEAR

THEY taught the bear to dance
And they led him on a chain,
But he escaped by some mischance
 Back to his native land again.
The other bears soon as they saw him
 coming,
To meet their countryman they all came
 running.
 And soon the wood
Was filled with bears who roared and ramped
 In sheer beatitude.
And one bear to the other said:
“Our Mishka’s risen from the dead.”
 And so they came to meet him
 And greet him
 And kiss him and embrace him.
The beasts they were so glad,
They all went mad.
How might they Mishka fête,
 How celebrate
 The story
 Of Mishka’s glory?

Round

THE DANCING BEAR

Round Mishka in a ring
They stood and begged he'd tell them every-
thing.

His toings and his froings
And all his doings,
Mishka retold, and to their eyes made
plain

How he was wont to dance upon his chain.
The bears with one accord

Applaud
The dancer's art. Then each spectator tried
Himself to dance; himself with Mishka vied.

But, oh mischance,
Turn as he might,
On his hands he could not stand upright,
And much less dance.

When Mishka saw them prone,
Standing alone
And far from troubled
His efforts he redoubled.

Anew he danced; anew he pranced,
And with disdain around him glanced.
Then against Mishka they let loose
Malice and slander and abuse.

Art with its cranks and quips
Had suffered an eclipse,

The

THE DANCING BEAR



The bears began to howl and shout:
“Turn Mishka out. Turn Mishka out.”
They cry with roars and angry hoots:
“Mishka’s got quite above his boots.
“The beast, the ass,
“He thinks he can surpass
 “Us all.”

On Mishka then they fall,
And they hunt him to and fro
Till from the wood
He needs must fly
 To solitude.



THE THREE BEARS

ONCE upon a time a little girl left her home and went out into the forest. In the forest she lost herself, and began to try and find her way home, but she could not find it, and she came to a little house in the forest.

The door stood open. She gave a look in at the door, and she saw that there was no one in the little house, and she went in. In this little house lived three bears. One was the father-bear; his name was Michael Ivanovitch.

THE THREE BEARS

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Ivanovitch. He was big and shaggy. The second was a she-bear; she was not so big, and her name was Nastasia Petrovna. The third was a little bear-cub, and his name was Mishutka. The bears were not at home. They had gone out for a stroll in the forest.

In the little house there were two rooms: one was the dining-room, the other was the bed-room. The little girl went into the dining-room, and she saw on the table three cups—the first cup was very big; that was Michael Ivanovitch's cup. The second cup was not so big; that was Nastasia Petrovna's. The third was a little blue cup, and that was Mishutka's. By the side of each cup lay a spoon; one was big, the other not so big, and the third quite small.

The little girl took up the biggest spoon and began to eat out of the biggest cup, and then she took up the middle-sized spoon and ate out of the middle-sized cup, and then she took the little small spoon and ate out of the little blue cup. And she thought that Mishutka's porridge was the best of all.

The little girl wanted to sit down, and she
saw

THE THREE BEARS

took his cup, gave a look into it, and began to roar in his terrible voice:

“SOME ONE HAS BEEN EATING OUT OF MY CUP!”

Nastasia Petrovna looked into her cup and growled not quite so loudly:

“SOME ONE HAS BEEN EATING OUT OF MY CUP!”

But Mishutka, when he saw his cup empty, began to whimper in his small voice:

“Some one has been eating out of my cup and has eaten it all up!”

Michael Ivanovitch looked at his chair and growled in his terrible voice:

“SOME ONE HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR AND HAS MOVED IT FROM ITS PLACE.”

Nastasia Petrovna looked at her chair and growled not quite so loudly:

“SOME ONE HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR AND HAS MOVED IT FROM ITS PLACE.”

Mishutka looked at his little chair, all broken to pieces, and he whined out:

“Some one has been sitting in my chair and has broken it.”

The bears went to the upstairs room.

“SOME

THE THREE BEARS

“SOME ONE HAS BEEN LYING ON MY BED AND HAS RUMPLED IT UP,” roared out Michael Ivanovitch in his terrible voice.

“WHO HAS BEEN LYING ON MY BED AND HAS RUMPLED IT UP?” growled Nastasia Petrovna not quite so loudly.

But Mishutka got a stool and climbed up on to his little bed, and whimpered in his small voice:

“Some one has been lying in my bed!”

And suddenly he caught sight of the little girl, and he squealed as though they were cutting him to bits:

“There she is! Catch her! Catch her! There she is! Oh! Oh! Oh! Catch her!”

And he wanted to bite her. The little girl opened her eyes and caught sight of the bears and rushed to the window. It was open and she jumped out and flew off. And the bears could not catch her up.

THE BEAR AND THE BEES

THE woodland creatures held election
To fill the office for inspection
Of honey-hives; in early spring
The candidates came mustering;
All others were rejected,
Mishka put in his nose and—was elected.
You'll say the choice was somewhat funny,
Since Mishka was a whale for honey.

Think as you will,
Wild creatures are wild creatures still.
Mishka the honey pinched, and in his cave
He hid it safe, the hoary knave.
And then began a-fussing and a-fuming,
Accusing and condemning and subsuming,
And Mishka got the sack,
But no one got their honey back.
The court confirmed their own decision,
But, in derision,
Mishka, old ruffian, never flicked an ear,
With conscience clear,
He for a season to his cave withdraws.
There, soft and warm, he sucks his honeyed
paws,
To the world and its temptations bids adieu,
"To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures
new."



THE BEAR-PRINCE

THERE was once a rich merchant who had three daughters. He made ready for a journey in quest of merchandise, and he asked his daughters what they would like him to bring back with him. The eldest daughter said: "Bring me pearls"; the second said: "Bring me a ring"; and the youngest said: "I do not want anything, but if you give me a thought, bring me a hazel twig."

The merchant started on his journey, finished his business, and bought for his eldest daughter

THE BEAR-PRINCE

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daughter pearls, and for his second daughter a ring. On his way home he passed through a great wood, and he remembered that his youngest daughter had asked for nothing, only for a hazel twig, and he got down from his cart and went to pluck a hazel twig. Suddenly on the hazel bush he saw a twig, and it was not like other twigs; on it were golden nuts. The merchant thought to himself: "Ah, here is a nice present for my good little youngest daughter!" He bent the twig and broke it off; and suddenly before him stood a bear, and he caught the merchant by the arm and said:

"How dare you break off my twig? Now I am going to eat you up." The merchant was terribly frightened and said:

"I would not have broken off the twig, but my youngest daughter asked me to." The bear said:

"Then go home, but remember this. Whoever meets you first when you get home, her you must give to me in marriage."

The merchant promised, and the bear let him go. The merchant went on his way and reached his home.

The

THE BEAR-PRINCE

The moment he came into the courtyard, there ran out to meet him his youngest daughter, his favourite one. The merchant remembered that he had promised that whoever first met him he would give in marriage to the bear, and he almost fainted.

The merchant told them all that had happened to him, and how he must needs give his youngest daughter in marriage to the bear. They all began to cry. But the mother said:

“Do not cry. I know what we must do. When the bear comes for our daughter, we will dress up the shepherd’s daughter and give her in marriage instead.”

One day they were all sitting in the house, and they saw a brougham driving up into the court. They watched, and they saw the bear step out of the brougham. The bear came up to the merchant and said:

“Give me your daughter.”

The merchant could not think what to say. But the mother had her plan ready; she dressed up the shepherd’s daughter and led her out to the bear. The bear handed her into the brougham and they drove off. They had

THE BEAR-PRINCE

had scarcely started when the bear began to roar and wanted to eat up the shepherd's daughter. Then she confessed that she was not the merchant's daughter, but a shepherd's child.

The bear returned to the merchant and said:

"You have deceived me, give me your real daughter."

They began to cry, and they dressed their daughter, said good-bye to her, and gave her to the bear. They drove on and on, and at last they arrived at a great wood, and there they stopped. The bear got out of the brougham and said:

"Here is our home, follow me."

And the bear went down into a pit, and the maiden followed him. Then the bear opened a great door and led the maiden into a dark cellar and said:

"Follow me."

The maiden shook with fear and thought her last hour was come, but all the same she followed the bear. Of a sudden something crashed like thunder and it became light, and the maiden saw that she was not in a cellar,
but

THE BEAR-PRINCE

.....
but in a splendid palace. It was light and there was music playing, and richly dressed people came to meet her and bowed before her, and by her side was a young Prince. And the Prince came up to her and said:

“I am not a bear. I am a Prince and I wish to marry you.”

Then they sent for her father and her mother, and they invited guests and made a marriage feast. And they lived happily ever after, and always kept the hazel twig.

THE BEAR

AN old man and an old woman lived together. The old woman wanted some bear's flesh. "Be off, old man, and get me some bear's flesh." The old man took an axe and went off into the wood. When he got there he looked this way and that. There was lying under a log an old bear, and he was fast asleep. The old man never gave it a second thought, but cut off the bear's paw and went home with it. That evening he came to the old woman and said: "Come on, cook the bear's paw." The old woman took the paw, stripped the skin, and plucked off the fur. She put the flesh to cook in the stove, hid the skin under her, combed the fur with a comb and began to weave it. And what about the bear? The poor cripple woke up and began to roar all through the wood. He roared and roared, and then he be-thought himself and he made himself a leg of lime wood; he went to the old man on his wooden leg and sang:

"Wooden leg go creaking,
"Lime-tree leg go squeaking.

THE BEAR

“All the earth is sleeping,
“All the water sleeping,
“In the village and the hamlet
“All men slumber.

“One old woman is not sleeping,
“She my fur is weaving,
“She my flesh is cooking,
“She my hide is tanning.”

The old man and the old woman were terrified. What were they to do? Where could they hide themselves?

“Come on, old man,” said the old woman, “creep into the basket. I’ll hang you up behind the door, and I will creep on to the stove and hide behind the firewood.”

No sooner said than done. The moment the bear came into the izba, the basket with the old man in it fell down and was smashed to bits on the ground. The bear was frightened to death, and off he went into the wood.

THE BEAR IN THE TROÏKA

A BEAR-LEADER came up with his bear to a tavern. He fastened the bear up to the gate and went into the tavern for a drink. A postillion drove up to the tavern in a troïka, fastened the rein of the shaft-horse to one of the shafts, and he, too, went into the tavern for a drink. Now the postillion had some buns in the troïka. The bear smelt the buns, unfastened himself, went up to the cart, climbed in, and began scrabbling about among the hay. The horses gave a look round and rattled off down the road, away from the tavern. The bear caught hold of the staff-side with his paws and didn't know what to do. But the farther the horses went, the more frightened they got. The bear clung on to the staff-side with his front paws, just turning his head first to one side, then to the other. But the horses kept looking round, and galloped faster and faster up hill and down hill, so that the passers-by were not able to get out of the way in time. On and on galloped the three horses covered with

THE BEAR IN THE TROÏKA

with sweat, and inside sat the bear, holding on to the staff-side, and looking round from side to side. The bear saw that it was a bad business, and that his life was in danger; he began to roar. The horses rushed on faster than ever. They galloped and galloped till they reached their own village. Everybody looked out to see what all this galloping was about. The horses stopped sharp in front of the closed gates of their master's courtyard. Their mistress looked out to see what was the matter. This was a queer way for the master to come home. Clearly he was drunk. Out she came, and down from the troïka climbed—not the master, but a bear! Out he came and made off to the fields and the woods.

*THE HARE AS NURSE TO THE
BEAR-CUBS*

ONCE upon a time there lived a bear, and he had a great many little bears, and, as he had no wife, he was up to his ears in work: up early in the morning, off to collect firewood—but who in the meantime was to look after the children?

So the bear came to the conclusion that this state of things simply couldn't go on—leaving little bear-cubs with no one to look after them. All sorts of accidents might happen. They might scratch each other's eyes out, or mortally offend some neighbour by their pranks. No, it was clearly necessary to find some sort of nurse.

So the bear stuffed a sack with biscuits, heaved it over his shoulder and started off to search in high-ways and by-ways for some one to be a nurse to his bear-cubs.

A crow was the first to turn up.

“Hulloa, Bear! Where are *you* off to?”

“I'm looking for some one to be a nurse to my bear-cubs. I simply can't leave them quite by themselves. I'm up to the ears in
work,

HARE AS NURSE TO THE BEAR-CUBS

.....
the vulture began to screech in the vulture tongue, enough to pierce the drums of one's ears.

But the bear wouldn't so much as discuss the matter, and went on farther.

The next person to turn up was a hare.

"Hulloa! Whither away?"

"I'm looking for some one to be a nurse to my bear-cubs. As you yourself know quite well, I simply can't leave them to themselves, and I'm up to the ears in work and have constantly to be away from home."

"And what have you got there in the sack?"

"Biscuits."

"If you give me the biscuits, I'll be the nurse."

"But do you know how?"

"Upon my word! *Me* not know? I'll stay with your cubs and I'll say to them, 'Dear little bears, my little crooked-pawed beari-kins, sit still, don't growl, don't stamp about, Daddy's coming home from the wood with honey and raspberries: oh! such lots of sugary honeycombs and sweet raspberries!' I'll talk to them, I'll stroke them down their little backs, and down their little bellies,
their

HARE AS NURSE TO THE BEAR-CUBS

.....
their soft little bellies, and I'll say to them,
'Oh you little bears! Oh you funny crooked-
pawed little bears!' "

The bear drank in his words and was touched to the heart.

"Well, Ivanich, that's a bargain. You'll make a capital nurse."

"Of course I will!" and the hare twitched his ears. "Now then, let's see what's in the sack."

The bear opened the sack, and the hare poked in his little nozzle, sniffed the biscuits all over, and was extremely satisfied with the results of his investigation.

"I close with the bargain," he said.

The bear heaved the sack—the hare's wages—on to his shoulders and led the hare back to his cave and his bear-cubs.

"Bear-cubs, here's a nurse for you. And you've got to mind him!"

And the hare snuggled down into the bear's cave, to fill the post of nurse.

HARE IVANICH

ONCE upon a time there lived a man who had three daughters, and you couldn't have said which was the most beautiful and which was the cleverest; and they did not know the meaning of fear. The eldest was called Darya, the middle one Agatha, and the youngest Marya.

Their cottage was in a forest, and the forest was so huge and thick that you could neither walk nor ride through it. Ceaselessly, all day long, the forest rustled, and, when night came and the stars were lit, under the stars it would hum threateningly and seem troubled and excited.

Many frightening things swarmed in the forest, but that, the sisters liked: they would scamper off in every direction and cry "cooey" to each other and mimic the birds; and you couldn't get them to come home till late at night. So merry, so darting, so fearless, were Darya, Agatha, and Marya.

HARE IVANICH

One day Darya, the eldest, was sweeping the cottage when a ball fell from the shelf, and rolled along the floor, and out at the door. In an instant, Darya was off, chasing it. But the ball rolled away, right into the forest; bounding over hillocks and through brushwood, it led her into the very thickest part of the forest and stood still at a bear's cave.

Who should come out of the cave but a bear!

When the bear caught sight of Darya he showed his fangs, put out his red tongue, stretched out his paws with claws on them, and said, "Will you be my wife? If not, I'll eat you up."

Darya said "Yes," and settled down with the bear.

Well, she led quite a comfortable life, and went for walks with the bear in the forest, and he showed her many strange things.

The bear had a watch-tower. In the watch-tower were three cells.

The bear opened the first cell, and it ran in a perfect stream of silver. The bear opened the second cell, and in it gushed up a spring of living water.

The



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HARE IVANICH

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The bear said to Darya: "I'm not going to show you the third cell, and I forbid you to go into it. If you do, I'll eat you up."

The whole day the bear was away foraging, and Darya was left all alone. She kept going up to the forbidden cell, for she had a mad desire to peep in. But the cell was guarded by Hare Ivanich.

Darya tried to get into conversation with Hare Ivanich, but the tail-less one (just to give him a little lesson the bear had bitten off his tail) preserved a stony silence. The hare preserved a stony silence and went on twitching his whiskers stained with red juice, and devouring raspberries; whereupon, in a fever of irritation, Darya began to poke him, in his haunches, in his back—anywhere—and to pull his silvery hare-whiskers. Then she calmed down and began to kiss him, and, finally, started dancing. This amused the hare, and he began to relent. In his day he had been a good dancer himself, but now his paws got tired—it was no use!

One day Hare Ivanich was dozing in the sun, and as soon as Darya saw this she made straight for the cell. She opened the little door

HARE IVANICH

door . . . her eyes were dazzled and you could have knocked her down with a feather: it was a big cell, and it was simply crammed with real gold. Darya was filled with a longing to touch it, so she stretched out a finger, and the finger turned to gold.

The bear arrived home with some raspberries, and they sat down to tea.

“How is it, Darya,” said the bear, “that you have a gold finger?”

“Yes, it turned into gold of its own accord,” answered Darya.

Whereupon the bear rose from table and ate up Darya, and flung her poor little bones into a corner.

* * * * *

The other two sisters were moping. They would trot up and down the forest, whistling like birds, and calling their darling sister. If only they could hear her voice answering! But they never did.

And a year went by, and then another went by, but there was not a word, not a sign, of Darya.

One day when Agatha, the middle one, was sweeping the cottage, she dropped her ball,

HARE IVANICH

ball, and it rolled away. Agatha went after her ball. On and on she went, and finally wandered into the heart of the forest; and there the ball stopped. And there was—the bear!

The bear stood up on his hind paws, ground his teeth, and said to Agatha: “Say you’ll be my wife, else I’ll eat you up.”

Agatha tried to put him off with “perhaps,” “later on,” “I don’t know.” But it was of no use — she had to stay and live with the bear.

The bear would take her walks in the forest, knock the trees about, ply her with honey, and show her endless engaging bear-tricks.

The bear had a watch-tower. In the watch-tower were three cells.

The bear opened the cells, and Agatha gazed on silver and living water.

“But I’m not going to open the third cell for you,” said the bear, “and I forbid you to go into it; if you do, I’ll eat you up.”

Agatha began to fret, and to rack her brains to find a plan for looking into the cell without the bear’s knowing.

Suddenly she caught sight of the hare rubbing

bing

HARE IVANICH

.....
bing himself and staring. Agatha went up to Hare Ivanich and tickled him under his whiskers stained with raspberry juice, but he didn't stir a hair: he only mewed in his own language, and there wasn't a word of sense.

One evening Hare Ivanich scampered out to look at the sunset, and Agatha made a dash for the cell. One look and she stood there petrified; but, petrified though she was, she was able to poke the gold with a finger, and the finger turned into gold. Then Agatha began to moan and groan: there was nothing to be done, the bear would see it and eat her up alive. She rushed off to the hare. Hare Ivanich was sitting singing to himself through his nose and patching his breeches. Agatha snatched the patch away from him and wound it round her golden finger.

Back came the bear, dragging along a hamper filled with woodland dainties. They sat down to supper.

"What's the matter with your finger, Agatha?" asked the bear.

"Nothing," said Agatha, "it's only that a
little

HARE IVANICH

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little sore place got rubbed, and I've put a rag round it."

"Here, I'll make it well."

The bear got up, and took off the rag. And under the rag was the golden finger.

So the bear ate Agatha up, and flung her poor little bones into a corner.

* * * * *

Marya fretted dreadfully.

"Sisters, my own little sisters, my darlings!" she would cuckoo like a cuckoo.

But the only answer was the rustle of the forest—the lordly forest!

And a year went past, and then another. But there was no sign of her sisters.

One day when Marya was sweeping the floor, her ball rolled away into the forest. Marya went after it and, like her sisters, walked bang into the bear's cave.

The bear jumped out of the cave, roared, and ground his teeth. Then he said to her:

"Say you'll be my wife, or else I'll eat you up."

But Marya did not yield at once but was stubborn in her refusal, and the bear fell a thrall to this little singing-bird of a maiden,
and

HARE IVANICH

and loved her more dearly than her sisters. The old shaggy one would go off to the forest to gather flowers for her and weave her garlands. Or he would take her walks and tell her stories about every blade of grass, and show her all his bear woodcraft. And sometimes he would roll over on to his back and sing bear-songs. And in the fullness of his joy he would smear the hare's little face all over with honey.

The bear had a watch-tower. In the watch-tower were three cells.

He showed it all to Marya—the silver and the living water. But he did not take her into the third cell.

“I forbid you to go into that cell, and if you do I'll eat you up.”

“‘I'll eat you up' indeed! You're a nice sort of creature!” snorted Marya, and began to contrive how she might deceive the bear.

But Hare Ivanich winked an eye at her. Hare Ivanich was quite foolish about Marya.

When the bear was out, Marya used to say to the hare:

“Puss, puss, little hare! Tell me, little grey
one,

HARE IVANICH

.....
one, what I'm to do. My sisters perished, and I shall perish too. The bear will eat me up."

And the hare would lean his head on his little paw, and gabble something in his own language.

So the days went by, and they would sit, a forlorn little pair, on the balcony and fret their hearts out.

One day Hare Ivanich was chopping wood into chips with which to boil the samovar for tea.

As everybody knows, if Hare Ivanich is making anything, there'll be enough to feed an army—such is the way of Hare Ivanich. So the whole court was strewed with the chips.

Marya was helping him. And suddenly she became so depressed that she could not bear the light of day and went off to moon about in the watch-tower. There she stood, weeping over the bones of her sisters, and, finally, in despair, she burst into the forbidden cell. She was almost blinded by the gold, and felt quite dizzy. But Marya did not lose her head: it was a chip that *she* put into the gold. And the chip became as hot as fire.

"Sisters,

HARE IVANICH

What were they to do with her? Marya gave some instructions to the hare.

“All right!” said he, “in half a mo’.” And he took Agatha by the hand and hid her in the hollow of a tree, and brought her pears and apples and every kind of jam. So *that* job was done.

The bear came home, and began to pet Marya. And Marya said: “Gruffikins, my own Gruffikins, will you do something for me if I ask you?”

“Tell me first what it is that I’m to do for you, because it might be that you wanted to have a look at the third cell, and then I’d eat you up.”

“It’s my father’s birthday to-morrow, and I want to bake him some cakes, and you to take them.”

“Yes, I can do that. Bake away.”

Marya was delighted, and rushed off to the kitchen to prepare the dough. She prepared the dough, and, when everything was ready, began to bake the cakes. When they were baked she got a sack, put Agatha into the sack, and covered her up with the cakes. She said to Agatha:

“The

HARE IVANICH

.....
“The bear will sit down soon and begin to open the sack, and you must say:

‘Don’t sit, husband mine, on the stump of the tree—

‘Your wife she can hear you, your wife she can see.’ ”

As soon as the sun was up, the bear heaved the sack on to his back and started on his way.

At midday he thought he would like a little rest, so he heaved the sack off his shoulders, and began to open it.

“Don’t sit, husband mine, on the stump of the tree—

“Your wife she can hear you, your wife she can see,”

shrieked Agatha from the sack.

The bear jumped up and pricked his ears.

“Well, I never!” he said to himself, “it was my Marya’s voice. She sees everything. She won’t even let a poor bear sit down for a minute!”

So the bear started off again. When he got to

HARE IVANICH

.....
to the cottage he plumped the sack down by the wicket-gate, and then made for home as fast as his paws would carry him.

Marya managed, somehow or other, to drag through another year. Then she sprinkled her sister's bones, and under her very eyes up jumped Darya, alive and kicking. Again Marya went to the hare, and he locked up Darya in the store-room.

That evening Marya said to the bear:

"It's my mother's birthday, and I'm going to bake her some cakes. Do take them to her, old crooked-pawed one."

And she whispered to Darya:

"When the bear sits down, you must call out to him:

'Don't sit, husband mine, on the stump of the tree—

'Your wife she can hear you, your wife she can see.' "

It all happened again in the same way. The bear was on the point of sitting down and opening the sack, when he heard the voice and hurried off as fast as he could on his way. And when he reached the wicket-gate,

HARE IVANICH

gate, he dropped the sack with a thud, and once again ran home as fast as he could.

* * * * *

“Puss, Puss, little grey hare! Tell me what I’m to do. I can’t stand living with the bear any longer. I want to go to my sisters.”

Hare Ivanich would have been very glad to advise Marya, but he couldn’t speak a word of her language. Nevertheless he was so attached to her that he never budged from her side. He seemed glued to it.

Everything he earned during the long winter the hare gave to Marya. The previous summer he had scampered over 777 countries to visit the bear’s gossip, to beg a glass slipper from him and a handful of pearls; and he gave them to Marya.

When the birds began to cheep in spring, and the little leaves began to creep out of their buds that they might peep out at the world, Marya said to the hare:

“Well, Hare Ivanich, I’ve thought of a plan, and I’m going to leave the bear.”

The hare mumbled something to himself.

That evening the bear said to Marya:

“What’s

HARE IVANICH

.....
out of his little home and had given a great cuff to his she-hare, and that the she-hare Ivanovna had died from the cuff.

And Hare Ivanich cried, and through his tears said something or other about some fox-cubs, but it was rather difficult to make out whether *he* had eaten *them* up, or whether *they* had devoured his children.

At dawn Marya took a dive into the sack, and laid the cakes all round her. Hare Ivanich carried the sack into the cave, locked the watch-tower, and sat down himself on the parapet to keep watch.

And when the bear with his burden was out of sight, the hare hid himself in his old form, and taking from a clamped chest a little red morocco-leather shoe, laid it before him on the little table and shed bitter tears.

“Sisters, little sisters, my darlings! Why have you left me alone in the middle of the forest in my ruined form? Why have you left me to live the last days of my hare-life alone in the middle of the forest in my ruined form? I was a true friend to you, I helped and guarded you—but you have all gone
away

HARE IVANICH

away and forgotten me. Sisters, little sisters,
my darlings!”

On and on went the bear; then he thought
he would sit down a little, and began to open
the sack.

“Don’t sit, husband mine, on the stump of
the tree—

“Your wife she can hear you, your wife she
can see,”

cried Marya from among the cakes.

“All right! All right!” roared the bear, and
galloped off as fast as he could go.

And when he reached the wicket-gate, he
dumped down the sack and was off home
without stopping to take breath.

* * * * *

Great was the rejoicing.

They were all three together again, the
three sisters, the three beauties—Darya,
Agatha, and Marya.

There was so much to ask and so much to
tell. And the sisters did not close an eye till
midnight.

But at midnight, under the stars, like a king
in its splendour, the forest began to hum
threateningly

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threateningly and to be troubled. And there arose a never-to-be-forgotten storm. The cottage shook, the wind tore open the shutters, lashed the roof and bent the ancient trees as if they had been blades of grass, twisting up by the roots oaks that were a hundred years old, tossing up the green giants to the sky, beyond the stars.

It was the bear, the bear shattering and smashing his empty cave, rolling away the beams, tossing away the fragments of the high watch-tower that he was done with now.

And, as soon as light began to show in the sky, the bear died of grief.

THE BOOK OF THE BEAR

EPILOGUE

TO BAD CHILDREN

AND Elisha went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord.

And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two of them.

2 KINGS ii. 23, 24.

THE END

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