

LITTLE FOLKS

A Lesson for Boys and Bears.

(‘Advance.’)

When Arthur had coaxed to drive the three-year-old colt, Uncle Jim had said ‘No.’ Then for a mile and a half Arthur whined and teased, pouted and sulked; and even snatched at the reins which Uncle Jim, only held more firmly in his own strong grasp. Finally the little boy squeezed out a few tears and declared that it was ‘real mean.’

Arthur, you will understand, was used to having his own way. Because he had not been a strong little boy he had never been sent to school; and at home almost everything he wanted he could get by teasing for it. What the teasing didn’t bring was certain to come if he only cried a little. So he was crying now.

For several minutes he cried; but, strange to say, Uncle Jim paid no attention to his tears, only drove on and whistled softly.

‘Say, Uncle,’ said Arthur, beginning all over again, ‘I think you might let me drive now.’

‘Well, well,’ said the uncle, ‘it does seem strange that a boy of seven years old should know less than a bear knows, and a baby bear at that.’

Arthur winked away his tears and stared.

‘Bears,’ continued Uncle Jim, ‘know how to mind; and that is something you haven’t learned yet. I think I’ll have to tell you how I once saw an old bear teach her children to do as they were told.’

‘Was it a real, wild bear, Uncle?’ and the eager voice quite forgot to whine.

‘It was when I was a boy in West Virginia,’ said Uncle Jim, ‘and we lived on a farm close to thick woods. It was a wild country, where often some farmer would shoot a wolf or a wildcat, and there was talk of bears. But I had never seen one. One hot day I had nearly reached home with a big basket of wild blackberries, when, just in front of me, trotting toward our cornfield—oh, oh! there was a great black bear, and with her three funny, fat little cubs.

‘Scared! Well, I was scared. A mother bear with her little ones is often savage and dangerous to meet, and she was only a few feet ahead of me. As soon as I could move

up a tree I scrambled with as little noise as possible; and there, among the thick leaves, I hid hoping that Mrs. Bear would take herself and her family away. But no. Not far from my tree the whole family stopped, and I could see that Madam Bear was talking earnestly to her children. Of course I couldn’t understand her language; but from the way she wagged her great black head and shook her huge paw I was sure she was telling them to stay just where they were, behind that log, while she went to find something for dinner. Up in my tree I hoped they wouldn’t spy me and make a dinner of “small boy.”

‘Down squatted all three little bears, while away went their mother into the corn-field. Until Mrs. Bear was out of sight the bears lay still; but as soon as they were sure she could no longer see them, over the log they climbed and scrambled away toward the cornfield too.

‘But now back came Mother Bear

and in her mouth some stalks and ears of fresh juicy corn. At the sight of this delicious dinner the three cubs squealed their delight and ran eagerly toward their mother, each one anxious to get the first taste. But instead of a taste, the first little cub that reached its mother was given a sound slap that sent him rolling over and over. The corn she had gathered for dinner Mrs. Bear laid down upon the ground, then back to the log she drove her disobedient children, cuffing and slapping them as they tumbled along before her. When all were safely settled behind the log and each naughty cub had had his ears soundly boxed, she sat up and gave them another solemn lecture. After that she went slowly back to her corn. Down beside it she sat, in sight of the hungry little bears who watched her with eager eyes. Their little black heads wagged, their little pink tongues lolled out of their mouths, but not one of them

