

XIII. FARMER BROWN'S BOY AND BUSTER BEAR MEET

If you should meet with Buster Bear
While walking through the wood,
What would you do? Now tell me true,
I'd run the best I could.

That is what Farmer Brown's boy did when he met Buster Bear, and a lot of the little people of the Green Forest and some from the Green Meadows saw him. When Farmer Brown's boy came hurrying home from the Laughing Brook without any fish one day and told about the great footprint he had seen in a muddy place on the bank deep in the Green Forest, and had said his was sure that it was the footprint of a Bear, he had been laughed at. Farmer Brown had laughed and laughed.

"Why," said he, "there hasn't been a Bear in the Green Forest for years and years and years, not since my own grandfather was a little boy, and that, you know, was a long, long, long time ago. If you want to find Mr. Bear, you will have to go to the Great Woods. I don't know who made that

footprint, but it certainly couldn't have been a Bear. I think you must have imagined it."

Then he had laughed some more, all of which goes to show how easy it is to be mistaken, and how foolish it is to laugh at things you really don't know about. Buster Bear _had_ come to live in the Green Forest, and Farmer Brown's boy _had_ seen his footprint. But Farmer Brown laughed so much and made fun of him so much, that at last his boy began to think that he must have been mistaken after all. So when he heard Blacky the Crow and Sammy Jay making a great fuss near the edge of the Green Forest, he never once thought of Buster Bear, as he started over to see what was going on.

When Blacky and Sammy saw him coming, they moved a little farther in to the Green Forest, still screaming in the most excited way. They felt sure that Farmer Brown's boy would follow them, and they meant to lead him to where Sammy had seen Buster Bear that morning. Then they would find out for sure if what Little Joe Otter had said was true,--that Farmer Brown's boy really was afraid of Buster Bear.

Now all around, behind trees and stumps, and under thick branches, and even in tree tops, were other little people watching with round, wide-open eyes to see what would happen. It was very exciting, the most exciting thing they could remember. You see, they had come to believe that Farmer Brown's boy wasn't afraid of anybody or anything, and as most of them were very much afraid of him, they had hard work to believe that he would really be afraid of even such a great, big, strong fellow as Buster Bear. Every one was so busy watching Farmer Brown's boy that no one saw Buster coming from the other direction.

You see, Buster walked very softly. Big as he is, he can walk without making the teeniest, weeniest sound. And that is how it happened that no one saw him or heard him until just as Farmer Brown's boy stepped out from behind one side of a thick little hemlock-tree, Buster Bear stepped out from behind the other side of that same little tree, and there they were face to face! Then everybody held their breath, even Blacky the Crow and Sammy Jay. For just a little minute it was so still there in the Green

Forest that not the least little sound could be heard. What was going to happen?