

XXIII. FARMER BROWN'S BOY LUNCHES ON BERRIES

When things go wrong in spite of you
To smile's the best thing you can do--
To smile and say, "I'm mighty glad
They are no worse; they're not so
bad!"

That is what Farmer Brown's boy said when he found that Buster Bear had stolen the berries he had worked so hard to pick and then had run off with the pail. You see, Farmer Brown's boy is learning to be something of a philosopher, one of those people who accept bad things cheerfully and right away see how they are better than they might have been. When he had first heard some one in the bushes where he had hidden his pail of berries, he had been very sure that it was one of the cows or young cattle who live in the Old Pasture during the summer. He had been afraid that they might stupidly kick

over the pail and spill the berries, and he had hurried to drive whoever it was away. It hadn't entered his head that it could be anybody who would eat those berries.

When he had yelled and Buster Bear had suddenly appeared, struggling to get off the pail which had caught over his head, Farmer Brown's boy had been too frightened to even move. Then he had seen Buster tear away through the brush even more frightened than he was, and right away his courage had begun to come back.

"If he is so afraid of me, I guess I needn't be afraid of him," said he. "I've lost my berries, but it is worth it to find out that he is afraid of me. There are plenty more on the bushes, and all I've got to do is to pick them. It might be worse."

He walked over to the place where the pail had been, and then he

remembered that when Buster ran away he had carried the pail with him, hanging about his neck. He whistled. It was a comical little whistle of chagrin as he realized that he had nothing in which to put more berries, even if he picked them. "It's worse than I thought," cried he. "That bear has cheated me out of that berry pie my mother promised me." Then he began to laugh, as he thought of how funny Buster Bear had looked with the pail about his neck, and then because, you know he is learning to be a philosopher, he once more repeated, "It might have been worse. Yes, indeed, it might have been worse. That bear might have tried to eat me instead of the berries. I guess I'll go eat that lunch I left back by the spring, and then I'll go home. I can pick berries some other day."

Chuckling happily over Buster Bear's great fright, Farmer Brown's

boy tramped back to the spring where he had left two thick sandwiches on a flat stone when he started to save his pail of berries. "My, but those sandwiches will taste good," thought he. "I'm glad they are big and thick. I never was hungrier in my life. Hello!" This he exclaimed right out loud, for he had just come in sight of the flat stone where the sandwiches should have been, and they were not there. No, Sir, there wasn't so much as a crumb left of those two thick sandwiches. You see, Old Man Coyote had found them and gobbled them up while Farmer Brown's boy was away.

But Farmer Brown's boy didn't know anything about Old Man Coyote. He rubbed his eyes and stared everywhere, even up in the trees, as if he thought those sandwiches might be hanging up there. They had disappeared as completely as if they never had

been, and Old Man Coyote had taken care to leave no trace of his visit. Farmer Brown's boy gaped foolishly this way and that way. Then, instead of growing angry, a slow smile stole over his freckled face. "I guess some one else was hungry too," he muttered. "Wonder who it was? Guess this Old Pasture is no place for me to-day. I'll fill up on berries and then I'll go home."

So Farmer Brown's boy made his lunch on blueberries and then rather sheepishly he started for home to tell of all the strange things that had happened to him in the Old Pasture. Two or three times, as he trudged along, he stopped to scratch his head thoughtfully. "I guess," said he at last, "that I'm not so smart as I thought I was, and I've got a lot to learn yet."

This is the end of the adventures of Buster Bear in this book because--

guess why. Because Old Mr. Toad insists that I must write a book about his adventures, and Old Mr. Toad is such a good friend of all of us that I am going to do it.