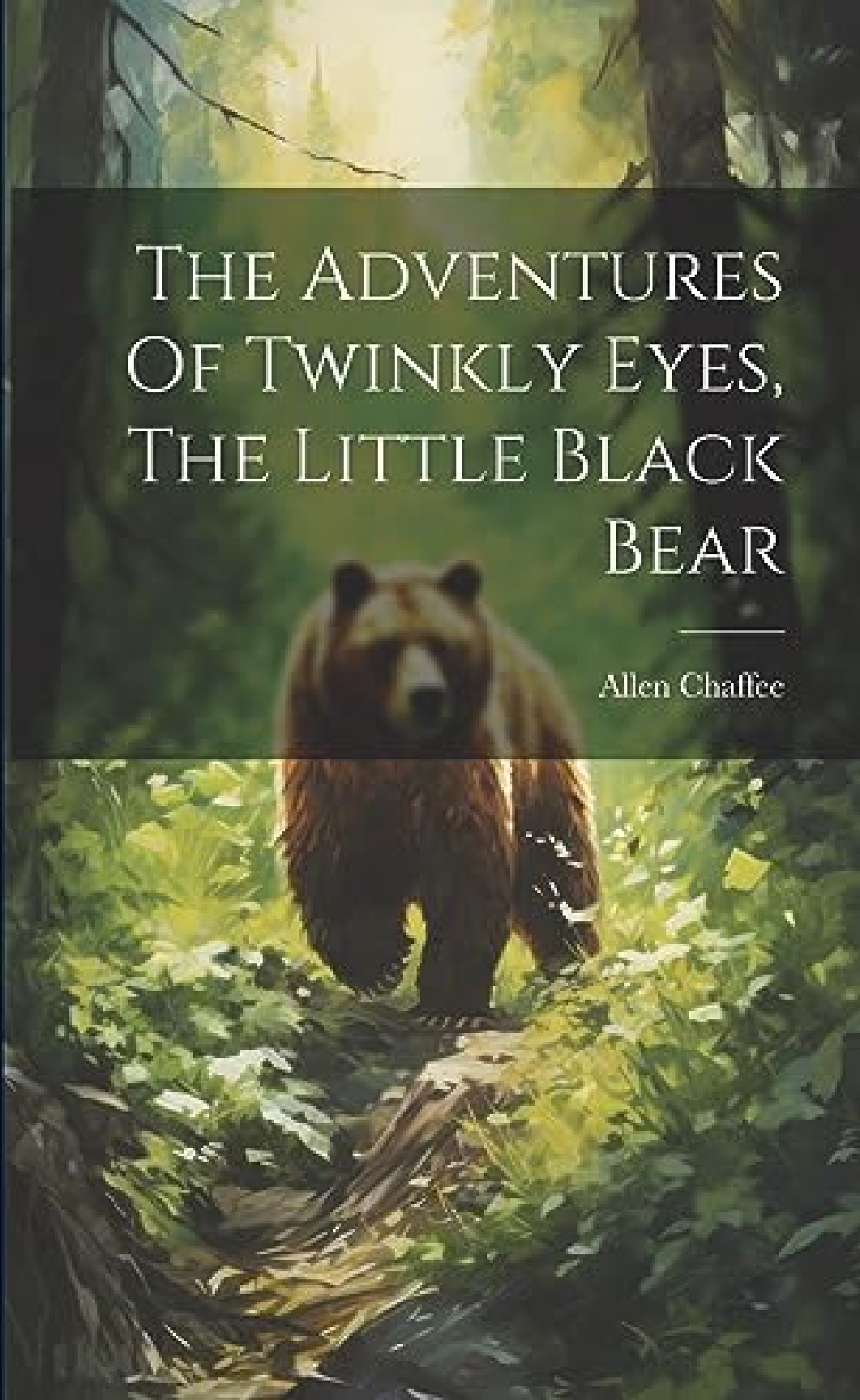


The Adventures Of Twinkly Eyes, The Little Black Bear

Allen Chaffee

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Title: The adventures of Twinkly Eyes the little Black Bear

Author: Allen Chaffee

Illustrator: Peter DaRu

Release date: October 13, 2025 [eBook #77049]

Language: English

Original publication: Springfield: Milton Bradley Company, 1919

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/77049

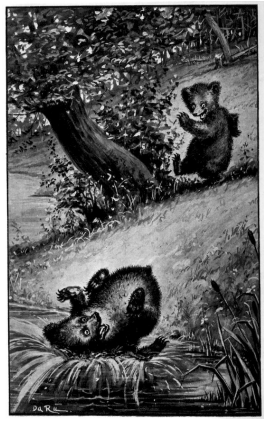
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ADVENTURES OF TWINKLY EYES THE LITTLE BLACK BEAR ***

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"Bump—Slide—Splash!—and he plunged beneath the surface of the icy lake."

—Page 3

THE ADVENTURES OF
Twinkly Eyes
THE LITTLE BLACK BEAR

By ALLEN CHAFFEE

Author of TALES OF THE TIMID, Little Stories of the Lives and Habits of the Wild, Told for Children and Their Elders.

Illustrated by PETER DARU

1919
MILTON BRADLEY COMPANY
SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

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Bradley Quality Books
for Children

INTRODUCTION

These little stories, which are intended both for children and their elders, are really true to natural science.

Disguised in fiction form, the reader gets a taste of biology, botany, zoology, and meteorology.

Such a taste may or may not lead the child to further study along those lines, but it will certainly give him a heightened appreciation of out-door life. Incidentally, he will have accumulated in the easiest possible way a great many facts that he will retain all his life.

The tales should also create a kindlier attitude toward our friends in fur and feathers, as well as instilling some of the stern virtues of the wilderness.

That these tales may be suitable for bedtime reading, no animal hero is ever killed. The big words are explained, and the adventure of each chapter harks back to the preceding in a way to refresh the memory of the reader who only takes time for a chapter an evening.

On the other hand, my readers have thus far included a large proportion of quite grown-up little boys.

ALLEN CHAFFEE.

To
HOWARD FOLSOM BROCK
whose great heart had in it a corner
for even the furred and
feathered folk.

INDEX

Chapter		Page
I.	Twinkly Gets a Ducking	1
II.	Mother Black Bear to the Rescue	4
III.	A Stern Lesson	7
IV.	But He Learns It	10
V.	Mrs. Porcupine Shows Fight	13
VI.	Driven from Their Pond	17
VII.	Sink or Swim	20
VIII.	Writho, the Black Snake	23
IX.	“Whoof! Whoof!”	26
X.	The Better Part of Valor	29
XI.	A Tip on Thunder-Storms	32
XII.	A Wild Mother’s Love	35
XIII.	Twinkly Eyes Gets Even	38
XIV.	A Different Twinkly Eyes	41
XV.	There’s Many a Slip	45
XVI.	The Bee Tree	48
XVII.	Twinkly Eyes and Trouble	51
XVIII.	Twinkly Shows His Mettle	54
XIX.	Down But Not Downed	57
XX.	Twinkly Applies First Aid	60

XXI.	Mammy Cottontail's Secret	63
XXII.	One of Twinkly's Neighbors	66
XXIII.	Introducing Bobby Lynx	69
XXIV.	A Bunny Ball	72
XXV.	Twinkly Eyes Attends a Frolic	75
XXVI.	A Joke On The Little Black Bear	78
XXVII.	School For Bunnies	81
XXVIII.	A Boy and A Bear	84
XXIX.	The Tables Are Turned	87
XXX.	A Climbing Match	90
XXXI.	The Bear Gets The Best of It	93
XXXII.	The Little Bears Go Fishing	96
XXXIII.	Twinkly Again Meets The Porcupine	99
XXXIV.	A Good Sport	102
XXXV.	Bobby Lynx Learns A Lesson	104
XXXVI.	Twinkly Watches Again	108
XXXVII.	Foxy Counsel	111
XXXVIII.	A Jolly World	114
XXXIX.	Who Will be Sorriest?	117
XL.	Twinkly Eyes Plays Safe	121
XLI.	Twinkly Eyes Gets a Great Surprise	124
XLII.	Twinkly Eyes Plots Mischief	127
XLIII.	Twinkly Teases Unk Wunk	130
XLIV.	Twinkly Eyes Gets His	133
XLV.	Bobby Lynx Goes Fishing	136
XLVI.	A New Acquaintance	139
XLVII.	The Hired Man Drops a Match	142
XLVIII.	The Forest Aflame	146
XLIX.	In the Face of a Common Peril	149
L.	While There is Life, There is Hope	153

LI.	The Boy from the Valley Farm	156
LII.	Twinkly’s Fellow Refugees	160
LIII.	A Way for the Squirrel Family	163
LIV.	What Happened to Fleet Foot	166
LV.	Twinkly Eyes Goes House-Hunting	169
LVI.	At the Sugar Camp	173
LVII.	A Feast and a Fast	176
LVIII.	The First Snow	179
LIX.	Twinkly Eyes Goes to Bed	182

THE ADVENTURES OF

Twinkly Eyes

THE LITTLE BLACK BEAR

I
TWINKLY GETS A DUCKING

Two such roly-poly babies you never did see!

Mother Black Bear had named them Woof and Twinkly Eyes.—And you never in all your life met two such rollicking black balls of mischief as those two cubs!

Small wonder that Mother Black Bear needed such long black claws, long white teeth, and such a terrifying growl, with two such treasures to protect.

Why, she wouldn't even let Father Black Bear come near them when they were so young, for fear some time they would plague him too far and make him lose his temper!

As the warm days of July ripened the blueberries along the slopes she used to lead the cubs down Mt. Olaf into the lowlands on berrying expeditions. And my! How they did enjoy these trips! How they stuffed themselves on the luscious fruit, snatching up great pawfuls of it, leaves and all, till their fuzzy sides rounded out like puff balls!

Then, too, there were often the most delicious sour-tasting ants under the logs and boulders that Mother Black Bear turned over for them! Life was one feast, what with the abundant food provided by Mother Black Bear herself and that found everywhere

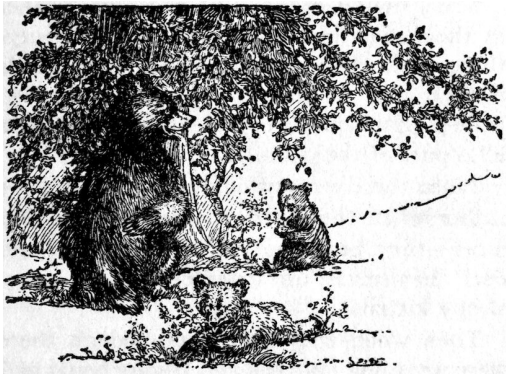
in the woods about them! Those cubs hadn't a complaint to make!

True, they climbed right over one another in their eagerness to get the best of everything, and they growled little baby growls in imitation of their mother and squealed little piggish squeals of delight. But that was all a part of the game.

When there was nothing to eat in sight—or rather when they were too full to hold any more—they began to yawn and stretch and curl themselves up together like so many sleepy kittens.

Then when they had slept enough there were wrestling matches and boxing bouts and playing pranks on mother,—pulling her ears and clambering over her till she was forced to box their ears.

One lazy afternoon Twinkly was just nodding off to sleep, all curled up in a little fuzzy ball, when Woof came up from behind and gave him a shove. Now, as it happened, Twinkly had been lying at the top of a steep incline that led down to Lone Lake, and he went down that incline like a rubber ball, before ever Mother Black Bear could stop him. Bump —slide—splash!—and he plunged beneath the surface of the icy lake.



II
MOTHER BLACK BEAR TO THE RESCUE

It is so wonderfully snug and comfy to be drowsing off on a warm afternoon, all curled up in a fuzzy little ball. So, at least, thought Twinkly Eyes, Mother Black Bear's littlest cub.

But what an awful contrast to find oneself rolling down the bank like a rubber ball, till one came, bump, slide, splash, to the icy water!

And then to go down, down, down, gasping for breath and so horribly frightened that one thought the end had come!

It was certainly a terrible experience for the five-months-old cub, when his brother Woof gave him that mischievous shove!

Mother Black Bear was really frightened. Not that she was afraid of Lone Lake—not a good swimmer like Mother Black Bear; and not that she feared being unable to rescue the little fellow. But Mothers are always frightened when anything happens to their babies. Mother Black Bear was no exception.

She was just like any other mother in believing that her babies were the brightest and the handsomest and the most wonderful little creatures that anyone ever had.

So she didn't even stop to think when she saw

Twinkly's little body rolling down the bank with its legs still wound around its nose. She just slid!—Afterwards there was a long trench where she had slid down that bank on her haunches!

She reached the water the very moment he did, and it wasn't two seconds before she had plunged into the blue depths and grabbed the struggling youngster by the nape of his neck.

Dragging him straight back up the bank, she spread him out in the sunshine and began licking him dry, while he whimpered and coaxed for sympathy.

"This teaches you a lesson, young man," she told him, when she had made sure he wasn't hurt and wasn't going to catch cold. "Never sleep on the edge of a bank. And Woof, don't you ever again shove anyone over the bank like that,—not unless it's someone you never want to see again," and she gave Woof a good cuff on the ear to help him remember.

"But I'm glad, in one way, that this had to happen. Because it shows that you must learn to swim at once. Life is uncertain at best, in the woods, and you never can tell when you may need to know."

"Ow! the water is too cold!" squealed Twinkly Eyes, backing away into the brush.

"We'll go where it isn't," said Mother Black Bear firmly. "But we're going this very afternoon. Come along!"



III
A STERN LESSON

“Oo! I don’t want to learn to swim!” squealed Twinkly Eyes.

“Why don’t you?” asked Mother Black Bear, though she had quite made up her mind to give the cubs a lesson that very afternoon.

When Mother Black Bear had made up her mind to a thing, that was all there was to be said about it, so far as the cubs were considered.

Her word was law. Still, that did not prevent them from complaining at times. It is a certain amount of relief to complain, even when one knows it won’t do any good, isn’t it? At least the two cubs found it so.

“The water’s so-o-o-o cold,” wailed Twinkly Eyes, whose wet fur made him shiver.

“You won’t be cold, once you get to paddling about,” said Mother Black Bear. “Come on, quick! There’s a shallow place farther on where the sun has warmed the water.”

She led the way through the bushes, Woof trotting obediently at her heels. Twinkly tried to run away, but he didn’t get very far. Mother Black Bear quickly found his hiding place.

“Come!” she insisted away down deep in her throat, with that rumbly sound that the cubs knew

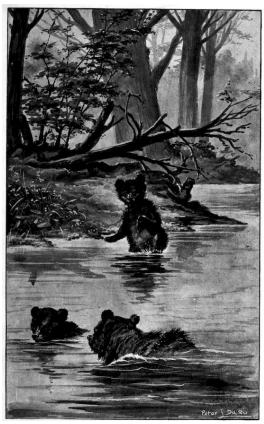
meant business.

Since the accident she felt it was not safe to let another day go by without making sure that they could at least keep from drowning.

“Come here!” she growled to Twinkly in no uncertain tone. That small imp simply didn’t dare disobey!

Woods babies generally are that way, and it is a lucky thing for them, let me tell you, or no telling what would happen to them!

Puffing and panting as they tumbled after her, the fat cubs soon found their mother seated on her haunches beside a quiet pool, where the sun danced through the leaves till the water seemed all mottled. Tall ferns grew all about them and every now and again a frightened frog would say, “K’dunk!” and go splashing to the bottom of the pond.



“Twinkly Eyes, are you coming?”

—Page 9

“Now, then, just follow me,” said Mother Black Bear, when they had stared at the water for a moment. She waded off till she stood shoulder deep.

Twinkly braced himself firmly with all four feet and cocked one ear at the depths before him. His unexpected plunge when Woof had rolled him off the bank had shaken his faith in water, even for drinking purposes.

“Come!” commanded Mother Black Bear, and he knew he would have to wade in or get a good boxing. He whimpered, wondering which would be worse. He was a most unhappy little bear cub, for one so roly-poly!

Woof on the other hand, had waded in after his mother, and now—much to his own surprise—found his fat sides floating with just a stroke or two of his broad forepaws.

“Twinkly Eyes, are you coming?” called Mother Black Bear, wading back to where he stood.

“I don’t want to know how to swim,” wept the little black rascal, backing away still farther.

The next instant Mother Black Bear seized him by the scruff of the neck and dropped him straight into the pool!

IV
BUT HE LEARNS IT

He had been badly frightened, had Twinkly Eyes, the littlest bear cub, when Woof shoved him into the lake.

But underneath it all he had had a comfortable feeling that Mother Black Bear would somehow come to the rescue. There had never been a time, in all the five months of his existence, when she had not solved his troubles for him.

But now! To have Mother herself drop him in! It was too much! There was no hope anywhere. No one to rescue him! No way ever to get out again unless he found a way himself!

As this fact dawned on him he struck out with his broad fore paws, his nose turned to shore. So vigorous were his efforts that the first thing his untrained little body did was to go down, down, down to the very bottom of the pond.

But he held his breath, because he remembered the time before, when he had swallowed so much water.

Somehow, he scarcely knew just how it happened, he found himself coming up again, safely enough.

“Wuhr! Splurf!” he gasped.

“Good work,” encouraged Mother Black Bear. “You see, you couldn’t drown if you wanted to!”

But already Twinkly Eyes had gone under water again, and this time he made the mistake of losing his nerve and trying to squeal for help. Of course that filled his nose with water, and that frightened him still more, till the first thing he knew, he was flapping about on the bottom of the pond with the most awful feeling he had ever known. His eyes he kept tight closed to keep the water out and not knowing where he had landed made it all the worse.

As an actual fact he hadn't been under a minute before Mother Black Bear had pulled him out again. But to the five months cub, it seemed an hour. "Help, Help!" he gasped, the minute his nose came above water.

His mother, seeing how terrified he had become, towed him gently to the bank and left him there to shake himself dry in the sun while she finished with his brother Woof.

This fat fellow had been enjoying Twinkly's struggles as he paddled slowly about the pond, and his little black eyes danced with laughter.

But Twinkly had not given it up. That laughter was more than he could stand. "I'll get you for that," he growled in his high-pitched little voice, running around the bank to the point nearest his brother. With one mighty leap he landed fairly on top of Woof.

And Woof? Why, he simply took one deep breath and went under, and Twinkly went under with him. But this time he was too mad to be afraid. He forgot even to shut his eyes. Being able to see how near the bottom of the pond really was did more than you can imagine to give him confidence in himself.

The next thing Mother Black Bear knew, both cubs were swimming with all the zest of small boys.

But her pleasure was short lived. For rattling through the underbrush at that very moment came Mrs. Porcupine with three prickly babies, headed straight for their pond!

V
MRS. PORCUPINE SHOWS FIGHT

Yes, sir, Mother Black Bear's pleasure was short lived. For no sooner had the cubs started off side by side across the pond than there was a curious rattling sound behind her, like the rattling of dry twigs.

She turned her head like a flash. It was Mrs. Porcupine, her quills rattling together as she walked. She was headed straight for the little pond, and Mother Black Bear knew there was going to be trouble.

Not that she would have cared, had she been alone. She would have given it up willingly enough. In fact, had she been alone, she would have preferred a larger pond for her swim.

But Mother Black Bear was not alone. She had fat little Woof and Twinkly Eyes to look out for. And it certainly was too bad, now that they were really making headway with their swimming lesson, to have to give up their pond. Twinkly had at last forgotten to be afraid, but if they had to give up the pond to Mrs. Porcupine, he might lose his nerve again, and all her work would have gone for nothing.

Yet learn to swim he must, before ever another accident befell him. Of this Mother Black Bear felt very certain.

She, therefore, eyed Mrs. Porcupine a bit anxiously; the more so when she spied the three little porcupines creeping along behind her.

Of all the folk that live in the Deep Woods, there is probably none more absolutely fearless than Mrs. Porcupine, and for a very good reason. She knows that nothing can so much as touch her without getting badly hurt on her barbed quills.

Where everyone else darts along the forest trails alert to catch the slightest sight or sound or smell that might mean an enemy, she strolls along with the utmost calm. She knows that no one can touch even her babies without getting hurt. For they are just as full of quills as she is, and their little quills are even sharper.

But if she fears no attack, neither will she harm other animals unless attacked. It is only when they come too near that she strikes at them with her barbed tail.

This afternoon she was headed for the self-same little pond that Mother Black Bear had selected, and for the self-same reason, as we shall see. When she saw Mother Black Bear and the two cubs, she didn't stop for even an instant. She came right on to the edge of the pond as if there were no one already occupying it. She looked straight past Mother Black Bear as if she hadn't been there at all, and grunted to her babies to climb on her back.

Mother Black Bear gave a growl. "We got here first," said she, crossly. But Mrs. Porcupine pretended not to hear. She just went on into the water with her babies on her back—she had flattened down her quills for them—and from all the concern she showed, you would have thought she didn't know the bears were there. That was her way of showing

fight. She hadn't a doubt in the world that they would give their places to her.

"Come—quick!" Mother Black Bear called to her cubs, losing her nerve as the quilly creature allowed herself to float over on the side the cubs were on. "Quick, I tell you!—Scramble!"



VI
DRIVEN FROM THEIR POND

Well it was for Woof and Twinkly Eyes, the fat bear cubs, that they had learned obedience.

For had they not scrambled out of the pond the instant their mother bade them they would have got badly hurt.

Mrs. Porcupine is not a neighbor to be treated with disrespect, as Mother Black Bear knew. Had one of the cubs gone an inch too near her prickly babies, their little tails would have gone slap, slap right in the faces of the cubs, leaving their barbed quills behind them.

That is why, even though Mrs. Black Bear felt she had first right to the swimming pool, she gave it up to Mrs. Porcupine the minute that lady entered the water.

The bear cubs didn't in the least understand why they should be asked to scramble out of the pond so hastily; but they didn't stop to ask why. They just scrambled!

Once safely on the bank, Mother Black Bear hurried them to the shelter of the tall ferns and bracken. Here she posted them side by side where they could see the pond.

"Just watch," she whispered, "and see—what you

will see!”

The pair settled themselves on their awkward little haunches, eyes dancing with excitement. They did love a mystery!

Now Mrs. Porcupine is covered thick with quills, and these are as sharp as needles. When she meets an enemy she can make them stand out all over her back till she looks like a giant pincushion. But she can also flatten them down as smooth as a bale of hay.

Just on the edge of the pond, she flattened them all so nicely that the three baby porcupines were able to clamber aboard and sail out into the pond on her back.

“Gee! that must be fun,” thought Woof.

“I’ll bet they fall off,” thought Twinkly Eyes.

Mother Black Bear, who knew just what was going to happen, thought to herself, “I might have tried that myself if only I had thought in time!”

“Unk wunk, unk wunk, unk wunk!” sang Mrs. Porcupine, pulling up the water lily pads and munching the juicy roots.

“Unk wunk, unk wunk,” mimicked the little porcupines, nibbling at the bits she took in her mouth to see what they were like.

Lower and lower swam Mrs. Porcupine, till the babies had to climb higher on her back to keep from getting wet. Mother Black Bear’s eyes fairly twinkled at what was about to happen.

Lower still sank the living raft, till it was half under. The babies didn’t mind, once the surprise of getting wet was over. But the raft was sinking lower still. Now Mrs. Porcupine just had her nose out.

Then—suddenly—she dived clear under!



VII
SINK OR SWIM

“Ooh! They’ll drown!” squealed Twinkly Eyes, as Mrs. Porcupine went under water with her babies on her back.

But they didn’t!

It had come so gradually, for one thing, that they weren’t the least bit frightened. Mrs. Porcupine has simply flattened her quills down smooth and taken them on her back while she swam out for lily pads. They had nibbled the pads and thought they were having the finest kind of ride.

As Mrs. Porcupine went deeper into the water and the babies got their feet wet, they scarcely noticed, so warm was the water in the little pond and so sure were they that Mother was right there.

When she sank till they were all half under, they only thought it fun. They had no idea of what was going to happen before they reached dry land again. Had they known what was going to happen, they would have been dreadfully frightened. In fact, they wouldn’t have ventured out at all, even on their mother’s back.

It is often that way with people. If they knew just what was going to happen next, they would lose their nerve entirely. Yet generally when it does

happen, it isn't nearly so bad as they feared. Sometimes it isn't bad at all.

If the baby porcupines had had any idea that their mother was going to dive clear under water with them, they never in this world would have ventured one foot from shore. But that was one of the things Mrs. Porcupine kept to herself. She was very good at keeping things to herself, was Mrs. Porcupine, and it saved her a lot of trouble.

At any rate, from being in the warm pond water with their feet safely planted on Mother's back, the babies suddenly found themselves in the water with nothing under their feet but water, and Mother coming up away on the other side of the pond.

The two cubs, watching from the bracken, smiled from ear to ear, their little black eyes dancing with enjoyment.

"Come!" said Mrs. Porcupine, swimming about just out of reach. And the three baby porcupines simply had to strike out for themselves.

To their own very great surprise they found that their hollow quills floated them beautifully. In fact, it is easier for a porcupine to swim than it is for almost any other animal.

"What do you think of that?" Mother Black Bear asked her cubs.

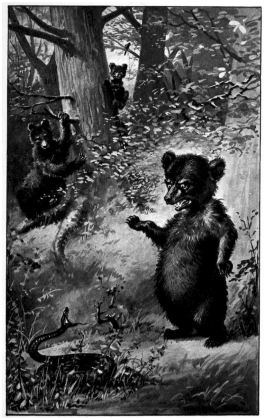
"Pretty slick," said Woof.

"Gee, I wish you'd taught me that way," said Twinkly Eyes.

"I'm going to teach you something else now," said Mother Black Bear, "Come!" and she started up a water maple that grew hard by.

"Oo—ee! I can't climb," Twinkly was just beginning, when he heard a curious rustling in the

grass behind him. Turning his head he spied Writho, the Black Snake, making straight toward him!



“He found himself staring straight at Writho the black snake.”

—Page 23

VIII
WRITHO, THE BLACK SNAKE

Now Twinkly Eyes had been perfectly certain a moment before that he could never climb that tree after his mother.

The next instant there had been a queer little rustling in the tall grass, and he found himself staring straight at Writho the Black Snake.

He had never seen a black snake before, but he would have known just from the smell of him that he was some one to avoid.

“Climb! Climb!” rumbled Mother Black Bear from the water maple. Had he needed warning, her anxious tone would have been enough.

And Twinkly Eyes climbed—my, how he scrambled up that tree! He didn’t once stop to wonder if he might fall off. He just drove his sharp little claws into the bark and up he went, faster than he would ever have dreamed possible!

Mother Black Bear smiled to herself. She had learned something from watching Mrs. Porcupine dive from under the little porcupines. She had learned that if a youngster is given his choice of sinking or swimming he will find a way to swim. Of course, she could have leaped to the rescue the instant Writho became dangerous. She wouldn’t have

let him hurt her cub! But when she saw him wriggling through the grass she knew that Twinkly Eyes would need no coaxing to take to the tree. In that she was not mistaken.

Meantime, where was Woof? He had climbed the tree on the other side of the trunk, quite without urging, and he now came out on a limb some distance from the ground.

“Good boy!” said Mother Black Bear, patting him fondly.

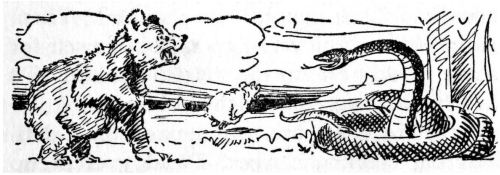
This was too much for Twinkly Eyes. Had not Woof caused all of his troubles that afternoon by rolling him into the water? Then, too, he felt that he was a good boy himself for having scrambled up the tree so readily. To have his brother get all the praise!

Fat little Woof was just licking up a delicious big black ant when Twinkly crept up behind him. The next instant he received a blow in the ribs that fairly knocked the breath out of him.

The wrestling match that followed sent both cubs spinning from their branch. But so fat they were, and so roly-poly, that they minded their fall about as much as they would have a box on the ear. They just rolled over and over and over in each other’s arms all over the ferns and bracken, still punching and biffing one another.

In fact, they rolled about so fast that the first thing they knew they had come down on something cold and slippery that writhed out from under them with an angry hiss.

Woof, ever the quicker of the two, was back up his tree in a twinkling, but poor Twinkly Eyes was for the second time staring straight into the angry eyes of Writho. And the snake was between him and the tree!



IX
“WHOOF! WHOOF!”

“Trouble again!” thought Twinkly Eyes, as he found himself staring into the angry face of Writho, the Black Snake.

“You rolled right on me,” scolded Writho. “Haven’t you any consideration for other people at all?”

“I’m sorry,” pleaded the cub, “I had no idea—”

“You want to look where you’re going,” scolded Writho. “I could bite you for what you did!”

“Oh, please don’t,” squealed Twinkly Eyes, retreating toward the pond, as Writho wriggled closer. Then he remembered Mrs. Porcupine and her family, whom he could hear grunting “unk wunk” as they nibbled lily pads. It would never do to back up too close to those prickly creatures. Neither would it do to turn his back on Writho, whose red forked tongue hissed at him from between two of the sharpest looking fangs he had ever seen.

“Truly, I didn’t mean to step on you, Mr. Writho,” said the little bear, and his voice sounded very sorry and very much afraid.

But he kept backing around nearer and nearer his tree, until it was right behind him.

“Whoof, whoof!” he suddenly roared at the snake, stamping a fore foot loudly.

Writho was so amazed that he stood stone still, and in that instant the cub had raced up his tree in safety.

“Why didn’t you think of that before?” laughed Mother Bear. “Writho is an awful bluffer. He didn’t really mean to bite at all. The trouble was, it hurt his pride to be stepped on.”

“So was I a bluffer,” confessed Twinkly Eyes.

“No, you weren’t, my son. You could have killed him with one blow on the back of his neck, had he really tried to bite you.”

“Wish I’d known,” sighed the cub. “I certainly had a bad scare.”

“Now climb up here in the sun and dry your fur,” said Mother Black Bear, “while I talk to you. As a rule I don’t advise bluffing. I don’t advise making any threat you cannot back up with tooth or claw. Because once people find you out, they will have no more respect for you.

“But with a coward and a bluffer like Writho it often works. Most snakes are cowards. All they want is to be left in peace. They’ll only attack a big animal like you when you step on them and make them mad. They hiss and stick out their tongues at us just for a bluff.

“I’ve never seen Writho attack any animal larger than a hare or a chipmunk in all my life.

“But you’ll do well to keep clear out of the way of Mrs. Porcupine and the whole porcupine family, big and little,” and she peered back into the pond, where the three prickly babies were just following their mother out of the pond.

“Hello, there! I do believe they are making for our tree!”



X
THE BETTER PART OF VALOR

Mother Black Bear sighed as she saw Mrs. Porcupine making for her maple tree.

“If she wants it, I suppose she will have to have it,” she told the cubs. “Wisdom is the better part of valor.”

“What is wisdom?” asked Woof, the larger of the fat cubs.

“Wisdom,” said Mother Black Bear, “in this case is giving up our tree rather than having a fight with Mrs. Porcupine about it.”

“But we got here first,” shrilled Twinkly Eyes, the smaller cub. “She has no right to it.”

“That makes no difference with Mrs. Porcupine,” growled Mother Black Bear. “She has no sense of right and wrong. She is too well armed with those awful quills to value other people’s rights. She just about has things all her own way in the Deep Woods, because few of us care to fight with her. It’s lucky that all she wants is her own stubborn way. She is a ve-ge-tarian, you know. She eats no meat.

“Just why she should decide on our maple tree—of all the trees she has to choose between—is more than I can see. Though, of course, it IS easy for the little ones to climb.”

“Will they have to climb up there in the sun and dry off, too?” asked Twinkly Eyes.

“Where else would they get any sun?” asked Woof, gazing up at the forest roof. In this part of the woods the trees all grew so high and so close together that their upper branches interlaced, so that one only got a patch of the sky here and there.

Woof, peering through the green gloom, could see Mrs. Porcupine and the three little Porcupines slowly making toward their maple.

“Don’t let her have it,” he begged Mother Black Bear, who loved nothing better than to see a scrap. “You could lick her, Mother!”

“Well, no, I shouldn’t like to try it, not with you youngsters along,” she answered, swinging her long head from side to side uneasily, as she prepared to lead the way to the ground. “Your father might, but I shouldn’t like to try it.”

“Why, the old ‘Unk Wunk!’”

“First she chased us out of our pond, now out of our tree,” complained Twinkly Eyes. “Can’t we bluff her off, the way I did Writho, the black snake?”

“I should say not,” said Mother Black Bear in alarm. “Nothing on this earth could frighten Mrs. Porcupine. Come along here,” and she reached up and gave each cub a spank that sent them hurrying to the ground. It was not a moment too soon, for as they landed on one side of the trunk the Porcupine family started up the other, though for all the sign they made, Mother Black Bear and the cubs didn’t even exist.

But the latter’s peace of mind was short-lived.

“We are certainly going to have a thunder-storm,” exclaimed Mother Black Bear, as she sniffed the air.

“Are you scared, Mother?” asked Twinkly Eyes.

“Well, that all depends on how fast you cubs can beat it out of these woods!”

XI
A TIP ON THUNDER-STORMS

“No sir-ee! I certainly don’t like the looks of things,” said Mother Black Bear, hurrying the cubs through the green gloom of the forest aisles.

“Mrs. Porcupine is welcome to our maple tree! There’s going to be a thunder-storm, and it’s going to be a big one,” and she pointed her nose skyward to sniff.

Out over the lake the black clouds were banking up over the sky at a great rate. The cubs crowded close to her sides, as the rolling and rumbling of clouds banging together came to their ears.

The air was full of the peculiar fresh odor you always notice before a shower.

“Are you scared, mother?” Twinkly Eyes kept asking.

Mother Black Bear glanced about, this way and that.

On every side, as far as she could see, there were just five or six kinds of trees, oaks, poplars, willows, maples, elms and ash trees, all growing to nearly the same height. Here and there was a blackened trunk standing gaunt and naked where the lightning had struck. For these trees, as every woodsman knows, are the very ones most likely to be struck.

“I don’t like to get caught in these woods,” insisted Mother Black Bear, starting off at a brisk pace along the southern border of the lake. It was all the cubs could do to follow, paddling along on their chubby legs with panting breath and red tongues lolling from their little black muzzles.

“I can’t keep up,” whispered Twinkly Eyes who brought up the rear.

“Lightning waits for no one,” rumbled Mother Black Bear, refusing to slow down even a mite. A nearer crash of thunder, as the first big raindrops began to fall, sent her forward on the run.

“Where are we going?” asked Woof, who rather enjoyed the excitement.

“We’re going to find the kind of trees lightning doesn’t strike,” Mother Black Bear flung behind her without stopping.

“Beech, birch, chestnut, basswood!” She broke into a run.

“Oh, mother—those white birches over behind Pollywog pond,” gasped Woof, trying his best to keep up with her through the pelting rain.

“Just where we are headed,” rumbled Mother Black Bear. “If only—we can reach them—in time!”

A blinding flash of lightning darted down the trunk of a huge old oak to the left. This time the thunder seemed to come at the same instant.

Mother Black Bear looked back over her shoulder. Woof was close behind,—but where was Twinkly Eyes?

She turned instantly to find out.

XII
A WILD MOTHER'S LOVE

At the instant of the lightning flash that came so near, Mother Black Bear had been racing for dear life to get to the safe shelter of the birch grove.

She knew that lightning is not so apt to strike in a birch grove as in the giant oaks where the storm had found them.

But then the cubs had both been close at her heels. The instant she missed Twinkly Eyes she turned back to find him. He lay flat on the ground, his heels in the air, just where he had tumbled when the big crash came. He was so frightened that he could scarce regain his feet. His legs trembled till he could go no further.

Mother Black Bear tried her best to carry him in her mouth, but he was so fat and roly-poly and wiggled so at every clap of thunder that she had to give it up.

Woof, who was close at her heels every minute, was all for climbing the tallest tree they could find, but Mother Black Bear selected a comparatively open patch with no tree higher than its neighbors; and there she crouched beside the cubs, covering them with her own body when the big drops turned to hailstones.

"It's bad to be caught among the oaks in a thunder storm," she told the cubs as they waited. "It's bad to be caught under any tall tree. Better far, when a storm comes up, abandon your tree and wait out in the open where there is nothing to attract the lightning.

"There are only two things in all the Deep Woods that a bear ought really to be afraid of, and one of those is lightning—for there's no fighting back," said Mother Black Bear.

"What is the other thing you are afraid of, Mother?" asked Woof, "Mrs. Porcupine?"

"No, I'm not afraid of Mrs. Porcupine, if I did think best to let her have our tree. I just believe in keeping out of her way, that's all."

"Then what is the other thing you are afraid of?" asked Twinkly Eyes, whose trembling had ceased as the storm passed around to the south.

"Men with guns," said Mother Black Bear im-press-ive-ly. (When you say a thing im-press-ive-ly, you try to impress it on other people's minds, so they will never forget.) "You can't fight men with guns. That is once when a bear just simply has to run away."

"That would suit Twinkly Eyes, all right," laughed Woof, poking his brother in the ribs. "Eh, there?"

The smaller cub gave a growl. "Just because I didn't want to learn to swim!—I'll teach you to be afraid yourself, one of these days! You see if I don't!" he growled in his baby throat, as he thought of how Woof had pushed him into the lake.

XIII
TWINKLY EYES GETS EVEN

He'd get even, somehow, Twinkly told himself, seizing his brother's nose; and as the fat cubs clinched the storm was forgotten.

Mother Black Bear gave them each a cuff, then stalked away, leaving them unprotected in the pelting hail.

Such clawing and biting and squealing as followed you never did see!

The clouds rolled away toward Mount Olaf and the hail changed to rain, and the rain suddenly gave way to a red glow in the West where the sun goes to bed. But the cubs fought on.

Mother Black Bear stood and watched, feeling that they were gaining a training in the use of their muscles that would stand them in good stead later on. She would interfere only if she saw that one of them was really getting hurt.



"Such clawing and
biting and squealing

—you never did see!”

—Page 38

Now just behind the circle of brushwood in which they had sought safety from the thunder storm there was an old root that sloped straight down a 15-foot incline.

To this Twinkly was trying his best to shove his brother, and though he was somewhat lighter than Woof, weighing a bare six pounds to Woof’s six and a half, he was also quicker on his feet, and he did finally succeed in backing the other up to the incline.

True, there was no lake at the bottom, as there had been when Woof shoved him down the bank in his sleep, but at least the teaser should find out what it felt like to be sent rolling in a helpless ball.

With a sudden wrench he sprang free, just as he had the larger cub humped up at the top of the slide, defending his head with all four paws. The result was that fat Woof rolled like a rubber ball straight down the incline, whirling around and around till he came up, plunk, against the trunk of a tree.

But to Twinkly Eyes’ surprise Woof not only picked himself up with a laugh of enjoyment, but he raced back up the slope to try it again, ducking his tiny head and doubling up into a ball for the purpose.

Again and again he tobogganed down that slope, Twinkly staring after him wide-eyed. So that was the way he had thought to get even!

He was so surprised that he stood clear up on his hind legs, staring. Then he tried it himself!



XIV
A DIFFERENT TWINKLY EYES

Summer passed, with its lessons. And thanks to Mother Black Bear, there wasn't an animal his size in all the Deep Woods that Twinkly Eyes was afraid of, when at last the long sleep came.

Emerging in the spring from the snug den in which he and his brother had drowsed away the long months, snuggled close into their mother's furs, he was a different Twinkly Eyes.

He was both older and wiser,—and oh, so much thinner! His voice had deepened, too.

Soon he began hunting by himself. For Mother Black Bear now had two new little roly-poly cubs. And sometimes he didn't find much to eat.

One morning he met Tattle-tale the Jay.

Now Tattletale was not really a mean fellow: he was just mischievous. He loved to play pranks. His tattling was for the most part a warning to the smaller forest folk of the approach of their enemies, Cooper the Hawk and Bobby Lynx, and Mother Black Bear.

When any of these were out for game, he would fly from one tree-top to another just ahead of them, screaming his warning at the top of his lungs, till there wasn't a hare or a wood mouse anywhere that

did not have a chance to run to hiding.

Now, though, he was so furious with the Red Squirrels for smashing two of Mrs. Jay's pretty eggs that he made up his mind to get even. It never once entered his head that he was the first offender. For if he hadn't begun the quarrel by robbing Shadow Tail, of his poor little hoard of seeds, Mother Red Squirrel would never have harmed the eggs.

If he had thought, he might have called it square, instead of making a bad matter worse. But Tattletale didn't stop to think. All he could see was his own grievance. Besides, Mrs. Jay felt so bad about the eggs that he had to promise her something that would soothe her ruffled feelings.

The very next morning, just as the first pink rays of the rising sun began glinting off the dew-wet leaves in the open places, he was flitting about after grasshoppers when he spied Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, slouching along the little trail to Pollywog Pond.

"Good morning, Mr. Bear," he chirped.

"Good morning," rumbled the yearling cub, peering and blinking into the treetops at the flash of blue wings. Twinkly's eyes are very poor, though his ears are so sharp and his nose sharper. He could hear the squeak of a wood mouse a long way off, and he could tell just by sniffing whether or not he would find those delicious sour-tasting ants underneath a fallen log.

"How do you find the hunting these days?" asked Tattletale politely.

"Oh, nothing extra—nothing extra at all," grumbled Twinkly Eyes. "Haven't had much of anything but roots and frogs so far this spring. Blueberries aren't ripe yet, there won't be any nuts

till fall, to say nothing of green corn. And a bear of my size can't make much of a living off of grubs and mice, of course. I do wish I could find a bee tree!"

"I don't suppose, now," ventured the Jay, "that you'd be interested in a nest of young squirrels?"

"Try me—just try me once!" chuckled the little bear.

"All right; see that old oak?" directed Tattletale, flying on ahead.



XV
THERE'S MANY A SLIP

Fortunately for most of us, there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, which only means that many a plan is laid that doesn't pan out just as it was expected to.

It was so in the case of Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear. It was lucky for him and it was lucky for Shadow Tail, the Red Squirrel, and it was lucky for Tattletale, the Jay. For if Tattletale had really been the means of leading the little Bear to Mother Red Squirrel's nest, she'd never have forgiven Tattletale, but surely would have gone back and broken the rest of the eggs on which he had left Mrs. Jay sitting so patiently.

And if Twinkly Eyes had really caught the squirrel babies, as he wanted to, he'd have made such an enemy of every squirrel in all the woods around that he'd never have known peace again. For they'd have followed through the treetops, everywhere he went, scolding him and warning the mice and frogs and snakes to beware of his coming.

But there was one thing Tattletale the Jay had not stopped to consider when he led Twinkly Eyes to the tree in which Mother Red Squirrel had located. He didn't stop to realize that the squirrel babies were far too clever to be caught napping.

No sooner did Shadow Tail and his brothers hear Twinkly's great claws scrambling up the tree trunk than they promptly leaped into another tree, and the bear had his climb for his trouble.

Sliding down the trunk like a bag of meal, he tried the next tree, on the Jay's advice, but with the same success. The little squirrels raced from branch to branch around him, hurling taunts and laughter at him, till he really began to be angry. But it was Mr. Jay he was angry with!

"See here," he grumbled, "I do believe you have just been playing a prank on me!"

"Oh, no, I assure you," began Tattletale, flying down beside the bear.

But Twinkly Eyes would have none of it. He suddenly remembered how often the Jay had warned his quarry away from him by flying just overhead and shrieking, "Look out, look out! A bear!"

With this memory bitter upon him, he made a sudden slap at Tattletale with his great barbed paw. But the bird was too quick for him. He was back in the tree tops before the little Bear knew what had happened.

"All right," said Tattletale, "if you feel that way about it! You can't do me any harm," and he was off with a flash of his blue wings.

For a while Twinkly wandered on, hungrily listening for the squeak of a shrew mouse. Then suddenly he pricked up his ears. It was—it certainly was the buzzing of a honey bee! It came from a little wild rose bush.

Now a honey bee meant but one thing to Twinkly Eyes—a bee tree, and a bee tree meant honey. He would follow the sound when the bee flew home, and then—Um! His mouth fairly watered.

XVI
THE BEE TREE

As Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, heard that buzzing from the wild rose bushes, he forgot his troubles with the Jay.

Indeed, he fairly danced for joy. For had he not been waiting greedily all spring for the sound of a honey bee?

Now he would find the bee tree, and feast on honey to his heart's content! For of all the good things in the great green woods—mice and berries and grubs, and fish and frogs, and sour-tasting little red ants, to say nothing of juicy roots, and the nuts of autumn—he loved nothing half so well as honey.

He had had a taste just once, but he had never forgotten!

While wrestling with his brother one day the spring before, when they were three months cubs, their mother had suddenly called them to follow and trailing straight after a bee her sharp ears had discovered, she led them to a hollow tree where the yellow comb lay in great fragrant chunks.

Twinkly Eyes licked his chops at the memory. Then Mother Black Bear had shown them how to hide their noses and shut their eyes when the bees came too near these unprotected places. Otherwise

the angry insects could try as hard as they would, and they could not reach through the glossy fur.

Twinkly Eyes had escaped without a sting and he had decided in his infant mind that Mother was altogether too cautious for any use.

This year Mother Black Bear had a new set of cubs to teach and train, and Twinkly and his brother were living in bachelor quarters.

A moment Twinkly watched, and then the bee had all the honey she could carry. Buzzing happily, she started back through the woods toward an open glade on the other side of Pollywog Pond.

Twinkly followed, his sharp ears guiding him where his little near-sighted eyes could not, till his eager sniffings brought to his nostrils the first faint fragrance of the bee tree.

Now other bees began to join the first one, till there was quite a little swarm headed for a hollow pine—a great, gaunt tree that had been hollowed out by lightning and now stood, scarred and blackened, on the top of a hillock.

“It’s a pretty good world, after all,” Twinkly Eyes decided, as he ambled up the slope.



XVII
TWINKLY EYES AND TROUBLE

“Yes, sir, it’s a pretty good world after all,” mused Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, as he neared the bee tree.

Certainly everything about him promised a blissful day.

Warblers sung happily from every treetop, swallowtail butterflies danced above the wild rose bushes, and puffy white clouds shadowed the blue of the sky. There was just enough breeze to feel good as it ruffled his glossy fur. Then too, blueberries were nearly ripe, and the fragrance of wild grape vines promised delights to come.

But best of all was that heavy hum of a thousand bees carrying their golden honey into the hollow pine tree.

It was a tall old pine that had once been struck by lightning. One side was scored and blackened; near the top was a small dark hole, into which the returning bees poured steadily, while others poured steadily out again.

And oh! The wonderful odor that came from that hole! How it made his mouth water! There was nothing whatever to indicate that trouble might be near.

Now Twinkly Eyes had been in his mother's charge the first time he had climbed a bee tree, and thanks to her warnings he had escaped unstung. It seemed to him now, as he thought of that wonderful day, that his mother had been altogether more cautious than there was any need of being.

But, no sooner had his claws begun to rattle upon the trunk of the hollow pine than the buzzing grew louder, and it seemed to Twinkly Eyes that there was a new note in it, quite different from the contented hum he had heard before. In fact, he began to wonder if there might be trouble after all. Still, he was not one to give up at this point! The sweet comb would be worth a lot of trouble! He scrambled faster, till one paw clutched the edge of the hole.

Instantly the bees had settled thick upon his coat, trying their best to ram their red-hot stings into his glossy fur, but it was too thick for them, and Twinkly minded not at all.

Suddenly a red-hot needle struck him on the lip.

"Hoof—woof!" he protested, licking the burnt place. It hurt dreadfully.

Another needle pricked him, this time on the tip of his protruding tongue. This time Twinkly slapped so angrily that he flattened the bee, but it didn't help his tongue, and his lip began to swell.

But there was no time to think about that. As he reached for a better hold, his paw tore a strip of the rotten bark away, and he had to shut his eyes and cover his nose with his paw while the angry swarm darted about his head in a buzzing fury.

XVIII
TWINKLY SHOWS HIS METTLE

No, indeed, Twinkly Eyes was not the Bear to give up just when he had one paw in the honey!

For the same paw that covered his nose from the angry insects, as he clung to the old pine, also brought to his tongue the most wonderful flavor he had ever known.

All the smarting and burning in tongue and lip could not spoil that flavor. He must have more of it, and that at once! For what had he watched and waited these long weeks if not for this very chance? Was he to be driven from the feast by a little brown insect with a barb in the end of its tail?

No indeed! No mere honey bee could make him turn back now.

Struggling still nearer that dark round hole from which the fragrance issued he drew a long breath and plunged in.



“My how his little
black eyes danced

with the delight of
it!”

—Page 55

Another needle point, red hot, stung him, this time on the lid of his right eye; and if the sting on his lip had tortured him, this was something far, far worse. He whimpered unhappily, and rubbed the sore place gently against his upraised foreleg.

My! how those bees did buzz and threaten him! But they couldn’t reach him through his fur, so long as he kept his face protected. He clung to his hole just the same, and by and by he dug his free paw deep into the honeycomb within and brought a great luscious chunk to his mouth.

Now that their little store was really disappearing, despite all they could do the bees at once began setting to work to rescue some of their treasure. Still there were enough left on guard to give Twinkly cause for watchfulness.

He grabbed another mouthful, and gulped it down, with the bees that still clung to it. My, how his little black eyes danced with the delight of it!

If only that eyelid would not smart so dreadfully! It was swelling, too, and he could hardly see out of that eye at all.

His tongue was swollen, too, on the tip end where the bee had stung him, till it began to feel so big he feared he wouldn’t be able to close his jaws in another minute.

But he would not give up! Not Twinkly Eyes! Not till every last smell of that honey was gone! Now that he had risked it thus far, he reasoned, he might as well have something to sweeten his pain.

The little Black Bear was nothing if not persistent, and persistence is a virtue that stands one in good stead in the wilderness.

Then suddenly a most surprising thing happened.



XIX
DOWN BUT NOT DOWNED

A great many things can happen to a bear cub that he doesn't expect to happen.

It was so with Twinkly Eyes. No sooner had he made up his mind to enjoy his feast in the bee tree in spite of his stings when—zipp! Off came a great long strip of the rotten bark! And while it disclosed even more of the yellow comb, it also happened to be the very strip of bark to which the little bear was clinging with his left forepaw.

Now his right paw was deep in the honey at the time, and a bear cannot cling in the top of a pine tree with his hind legs alone. The result was that there was a wild scrambling, then the sound of claws rattling noisily over the bark that they could not get a grip in, and finally the snapping of a hazel bush that stood just beneath.

Twinkly Eyes had come down like a bag of meal!

He gave one big grunt, then a series of whimpers. For even if you are a yearling cub and your bones are padded with great heavy muscles and thick fur, it isn't the most comfortable thing in the world to fall crashing out of the top of a bee tree.

Fortunately for Twinkly Eyes, he had hugged the trunk just enough, as he descended, to break the fall.

Then, too, he landed on the hazel bush, which sprang under him in a way still further to soften his landing. But even at that, things whirled about him for a few minutes there.

Then he arose, a bit groaningly, it is true—what with his swollen eyelid and his burning lip and tongue. And what do you suppose he did next?

Most anyone would have felt that he had had enough adventure to last him for some time. But not so Twinkly Eyes! That was not the kind of mettle he was made of!

Though his little near-sighted eyes could not see the crack that now reached for nearly his own length down the hollow trunk, his keen brown nose told him that the scent of honey was even stronger than before. And, though his black sides already stuck out, his mouth still watered for more.

He sniffed longingly, then tried to soothe his swelling eyelid with his paw. He certainly felt bunged up, to say nothing of the jolting he had just received. He couldn't see out of his right eye at all now, and there was a lump the size of a walnut on his lip.

But, oh, the delicious fragrance! The honey he had waited a year to find! In his long winter's sleep he had dreamed of it more than once, and licked his paws in vain. Throughout the lean spring, as he grubbed for roots, he had listened in vain for the very buzzing that now filled the air all about him.

It was too much! He would try again!

XX
TWINKLY APPLIES FIRST AID

There was no resisting that odor of wild honey dripping from the comb—not to one who loved wild honey like Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear!

He must have more! His eye swollen shut, his tongue stinging like fury with the hot flame of the bee's sting, he pulled himself together and started up the tree again.

The bees were working like mad to carry away at least a part of their store before he should devour it; but they were not too busy to try once more to drive him off. A fourth bee gave up his life to thrust his barbed and poisonous sting into his nose. But Twinkly Eyes only became the more stubborn in his desire to clean out the tree.

Bracing himself in the crotch of a branch just beneath the opening, he thrust one paw in deeply and brought it back dripping with yellow liquid and dotted with black bees. Bees and all went into his eager mouth, and he crunched joyously handful after handful. Once a bee tried to come too near, and with one sticky sweep of his honeyed paw he imprisoned the insect, whose wings stuck so fast he could only buzz helplessly, traveling back and forth from the place where the bees wanted the honey to the place where Twinkly Eyes wanted to have it.

Thus, in time, the treasure of the pine tree disappeared,—and my, you should have seen how that little bear's sides stuck out! It was a lucky thing for him that the honey was all gone, I tell you!

And what a sight he presented, as he slid down the trunk and ambled off to Pollywog Pond! His face by this time was smeared with honey from ear to ear. Flying leaves and little chips of bark clung to it as if they had been pasted there. Add to that his swollen eyelid, which by now had raised a great black welt, and his nose and his mouth all lumpy from the poisonous stings, and one would certainly have said he had been in a fight.

But he felt so perfectly blissful with his sides rounded out with honey the way they were that he wasn't the least bit sorry. Not Twinkly Eyes! He would have done the same thing over again the next day had he had the chance.

He knew just what to do with his wounds, and he did it. Searching along the banks until he found some particularly sticky clay, he plastered it freely all over his tortured face until he looked, if possible, worse than before.

But he felt a whole lot better, let me tell you. The wet clay soon began to draw the poison, and besides, bears get over things like that quicker than human beings would. So by the time he had had a nice long snooze and a drink and a stretch, and the round yellow moon began to rise from behind the firs, Twinkly Eyes was ready for almost anything.

XXI
MAMMY COTTONTAIL'S SECRET

Now Twinkly Eyes had a lively bump of curiosity on that furry black head of his. He was much interested in other people's affairs. And he used to lie hidden by the hour, just to find out what other wood-folk were up to. But of all the dwellers in that wilderness, none interested him so much as the Cottontail family. That is, none except his old enemy the porcupine!

One day, lying under a clump of high-bush blueberry bushes, in the early spring sunshine, he learned a secret.

"We have a secret at our house! Truly, truly, truly," sang Betty Bluebird, sitting on a fencepost with her red blouse turned to the warming glow of the early morning sunshine.

"We have too, we have too, we have too!" trilled Robin Red-breast, running along the roadway with a weather eye for worms.

And down in the marsh behind the barn, Conqueree, the Red Winged Blackbird, was shrilling at the Crows like a little soldier in red epaulettes: "Clear out! Or I'll put you out! I'm Conqueree! Conqueree! Conqueree!"

"You cawn't, cawn't, cawn't!" the crows retorted,

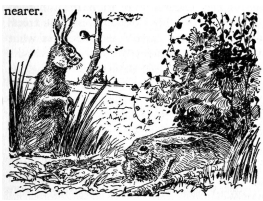
trying to drown out his threats with a hoarse chorus of denial, as they swirled around and around him, keeping just barely out of reach of his swift beak. “We have secrets we won’t tell! Such secrets!—Round, gray green secrets, four to a nest, hidden away up in the tops of the tallest pine trees! And you cawn’t, cawn’t, cawn’t guess what they are!—you cawn’t.”

“Trust a crow to tell all he knows!” chuckled Daddy and Mammy Cottontail, crouched on guard before a small round hole scooped out of the turf and lined with bits of fur from Mammy Cottontail’s breast. “We could tell a pretty cunning secret ourselves, only we have better sense than to shout our affairs to the four winds,” and their slim ears waggled wisely.

Sure enough, packed snugly back under a blanket of dried grass, six of the softest, roundest little wriggly-nosed babies that ever made a bunny feel like kicking his heels in the moonlight slept with their long ears folded close along their backs and their long hind legs doubled up under their fuzzy brown bodies.

“Do you suppose they’ve all got the same kind of secrets?” whispered Mammy Cottontail delightedly.

“Nothing to compare with ours,” sniffed Daddy, then stopped suddenly, as the little Bear snapped a twig in his effort to creep nearer.



XXII
ONE OF TWINKLY'S NEIGHBORS

Twinkly Eyes had roamed to quite another part of the woods when the twilight stillness was pierced by a sudden screech from up on Mount Olaf.

Mammy Cottontail's timid heart quailed within her. Mother Red Squirrel could scarce be blamed for all but dropping from her limb; and even Father Red Fox looked anxious at the thought of the red-brown pups in the rocky den on the hill-top.

Far down at the Valley Farm, "Lynx!" whispered the Boy, wide-eyed, "Hope he isn't coming down to make trouble for our wood folks. He's mighty fond of baby bunnies."

Away up almost at the top of Mount Olaf a great cat, three times as heavy as barnyard Tamas, was creeping, creeping, creeping along through the underbrush, on great furry feet that made no sound.

His broad ears bore little tufts at their tips, his jowls were squared off with the most ferocious-looking whiskers, and his thick tail was no more than a stub.

"Children," quavered Mammy Cottontail, "That was a lynx! Now, I want to tell you something, and I want you to listen with all your ears, because it is very, very serious!

“Old man Lynx and his family live up on that mountain top, and while they don’t come down this far once in a coon’s age, we’ve got to be prepared! Because it would be a terrible thing if they did! Terrible for us, and terrible for everyone we know!

“I’ll tell you why he screeched that way! It was to scare timid folks like us, so that we’d jump and betray our whereabouts. Yes’m, that’s exactly what he screeched for! To make us jump!

“Because, you see, when Mother Nature invented little brown bunnies and grouse hens and muskrats and all the rest of us forest folk, she knew exactly what she was about. And she gave us our brown coats so that we’d match the ground, and couldn’t be seen by the big prowling creatures that are always trying to have rabbit and grouse for dinner. And just so long as we keep as still as field mice, we stand a fighting chance of not being seen.

“But Old Man Lynx knows this as well as we do. He knows that when he goes hunting o’nights, none but the foolish will be stirring a hair’s breadth from their own warm beds. And if there are no foolish ones that he can sneak up on, with his great padded paws that tip-toe so silently through the underbrush, he screams in the hope that it will startle some of us so dreadfully that we will forget to keep still, and jump.”

“It’s enough to make any one jump out of his skin,” said Daddy.

“But that’s exactly what the Old Man figures on. And if you can’t control your nerves any better than to jump when he screeches, he can see exactly where you are! If he’s anywhere near, that is! Well, you children had better go to sleep now. But just you remember this: Lie still when you hear him scream,

and ten to one he'll never know where you are."

"Yes, Mammy," whispered six timid little voices.

XXIII
INTRODUCING BOBBY LYNX

It was not often that Old Man Lynx gave voice to the pangs of hunger. For he knew that for every grouse or hare or baby fox he startled into betraying its whereabouts, he scared a dozen so far away that it made hunting harder next time.

But tonight he was teaching some one else the trick.

At the very time that Father Red Fox was viewing his own red-brown pups with such mingled pride and amusement, and Mother Douglas was driving Father Douglas out of the old oak tree, lest he should step on one of the squirrel babies, and Mammy and Daddy Cottontail were taking turn and turn about guarding the six brown bunnies on the edge of the cornfield, Madam Lynx—away up on the top of Mt. Olaf—was just as proud as any one of two great, scraggly kittens, as heavy-pawed and bob-tailed and fierce-looking as anything that could be imagined.

At first even these ferocious creatures were as blind and helpless and appealing as any tame kittens could have been, though without their grace. And as soon as they learned the use of their legs, they rolled and tumbled, and growled and spat, and boxed one another about, fully as mischievously as had Fluff, the maltese kitten at the farm, when she and her

little brothers lived in the basket behind the kitchen stove.

But Old Man Lynx was kept mighty busy, let me tell you, as soon as they were weaned and could eat meat; for the two youngsters were such ravenous creatures and they grew so fast, and the mountain air was so stimulating, that it just seemed as if he couldn't bring in enough to keep his share of the larder filled.

So it was by way of teaching young Bob Kitten and his brother how to hunt that old Man Lynx had screamed in such a blood-curdling manner.

Decidedly Wriggly Nose and Shadow Tail, and even fat young Frisky Fox, were going to have a very much harder time of it making their way in the world, now that there was a new young lynx on the top of Mount Olaf.

Twinkly Eyes was later to share a couple of interesting adventures with young Bobby Lynx.



XXIV
A BUNNY BALL

Mammy Cottontail, the little brown hare, had been living in the Old Apple Orchard for several weeks now and the bunnies were half-grown.

One moonlight night toward the end of June—the self-same night that Twinkly Eyes had found the bee tree, Mammy said:

"Children, we are going on a frolic tonight. So come along, Flap Ears and Furtive Feet, and Wriggly Nose and Paddy Paws, and Fuzzy Wuzz and Hippity Skip! Daddy's there waiting for us now!"

Through the moonlight woods she led them in one long line along a little briar-grown rabbit path, the youngsters kicking their heels high in their excitement.

Now they crept under a patch of huckleberry bushes, and now they hugged the shadow of a grapevine. Straight across the blueberry burn, they galloped,—under the fruit-laden bushes, then across a corner of wild meadow where the daisies gleamed high above their heads, and all about them was the aroma of sweet fern.

Their path ran zig-zag, this way and that, here circling back upon itself, there darting off at right angles, till anyone trying to follow it would have had

an interesting time, to say the least.

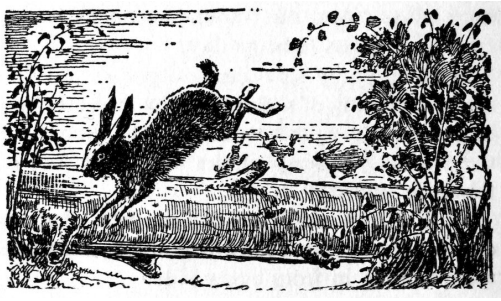
But after various turnings and twistings through the woods, and doublings around the rocky hilltop behind Pollywog Pond, they found themselves away back on the border of a little glade, an opening in the trees where the grass was short and fine like that in a fairy ring. And the moon streamed down, making it all as light as day.

Here on every side were outposts, and the mere crunching of a dead leaf by any creature larger than a rabbit would be the signal for the warning tap-tap of the long hind feet of those on guard.

Within the circle of the moonlit glade a dozen hares were already assembled, and more were coming in from every side.

Mammy Cottontail drew up in the shadow of a tree trunk, that the youngsters might get their courage up before joining those in the open. Soon there were half a hundred bunnies, young and old, together, scampering about and having a glorious good time. They pranced and they danced and they raced one another. They leapt back and forth across a log and they leap-frogged over one another, kicking their heels to the moon. There was never a sound to break the stillness save the chirping of crickets away back in the meadow they had left.

Then, so suddenly that Mammy's heart gave an extra beat, there came the warning thump! thump! thump! just behind them!



XXV
TWINKLY EYES ATTENDS THE FROLIC

Now Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, had no idea when he awoke of all that was going on so near him.

But ambling down to Pollywog Pond for a drink after his feast of honey, the sound of his crunching over a dead twig was enough to warn the sharp ears that ringed about the rabbit frolic; and from first one outpost and then another came the thump, thump, thump, of a half hundred padded feet on the forest floor.

In an instant every one of the bunnies which a moment before had been capering madly in the moonlight had sought cover.

Mammy Cottontail and her little brood, watching from the shadow of their tree trunk, were already hidden, hearts beating bumpety-bump in their anxiety.

For perhaps ten minutes they listened, their hearts sounding like trip hammers in the breathing stillness of the forest night, in which no creature larger than an insect moved, save the silent-winged bats and owls.

At least, that was what the listening bunnies thought! But Twinkly Eyes, the sly one!—had heard

the thump, thump of the outposts; and he knew just what it meant. Although his little sides were already rounded from his feast of honey, a bear is always hungry. And Twinkly Eyes decided to attend the frolic.

If Mammy Cottontail, anxious little mother that she was, had known all that was being plotted in the head of the little Bear, she would have started her brood for home on the fastest gallop.

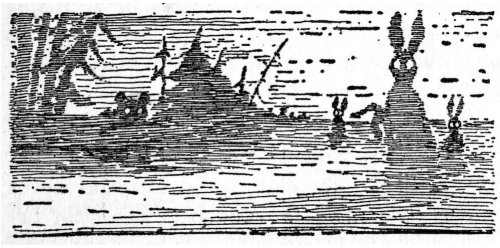
But Twinkly Eyes, for all his weight, had paws padded so softly that he can, when he wants to, steal through the underbrush without a sound to warn his quarry of his coming.

Yes, sir, that little rascal can slip through the woods as still as a mouse, and you could sit straining your ears but you would never hear so much as the crunching of a leaf beneath his foot. When he really wants to, he can move like a shadow.

Now he had decided to attend the frolic, but not to join in the play! Mammy Cottontail, never dreaming of the sleek black form that crept so silently to the edge of the clearing, led her six out among the merry-makers. Soon Wriggly Nose and Paddy Paws, and Flap Ears and Furtive Feet, and Fuzzy Wuzz and Hippity Skip were leaping and dancing as gaily as the best of them.

The full moon, shining down on the little glade, showed their furry forms so plainly that even Twinkly with his near-sighted little eyes, could see them kick their heels in air.

Crouched in the shadow of the very log where a little while before Mammy and her six had hidden, he watched and waited.



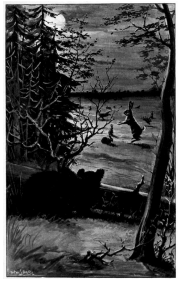
XXVI
A JOKE ON THE LITTLE BLACK BEAR

Twinkly Eyes had his mind all made up, as he hid there in the shadow of the tree trunk, to add a rabbit to his feast of honey.

He therefore crouched with his great steel paw ready to give the one crushing blow that would be necessary the moment the first brown bunny was so foolish as to pass within his reach.

He watched gleefully as he saw their sleek brown forms dancing so care-free in the moonlight. “Hippity skip and away we go!” their soft feet seemed to sing, as they galloped back and forth across a fallen log.

Saucy fellows, he told himself, as they flapped their long brown ears or leaped high in the air.



“Leaping high in the moonlight”

—Page 79

Oddly enough, so silently had the little Bear approached that not one of the outposts was aware of his presence. The wind was blowing directly toward him, so that they did not even get his scent.

Only Mammy Cottontail, prancing gaily around to the right, thought for just an instant that she had caught an alien odor. Leaping high in the moonlight, she struck her long hind feet three times upon the ground, to see if she could startle whatever it was into betraying its whereabouts.

At her danger signal, every bunny in the glade stopped stone still to stare and listen; but Twinkly Eyes was not to be thus betrayed. He was too big to be startled by her stamping, and too wise to come out into the open, where every rabbit, once warned, could easily outrun him.

Not he! Twinkly Eyes just bided his time, huddled down as still as any frightened field mouse. He sat so long in one position that his legs got cramped and he began to feel distinctly drowsy. Why on earth didn't one of those fat bunnies come just a wee bit closer? How weird they looked, now chasing one another, now pausing to nibble a few grasses, but always well within the open glade where the moon would have shown them the first instant an intruder thrust a paw within the charm-ed circle.

After a while, though, the wind died down, and with the bear scent that now suddenly came to the merrymakers, there was a series of frightened squeaks, and in less time than the twinkle of a moonbeam, every last bunny of them had darted under the ferns or into the deep shadows, and the

little glade was as empty as if they had never been there.

Then Wriggly Nose, more daring than the others, crept very, very silently toward that dreadful odor. He peered amazed at what he saw.

Twinkly Eyes had fallen fast asleep.



XXVII
SCHOOL FOR BUNNIES

Yes, sir, there was Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, fast asleep!

How Wriggly Nose and Paddy Paws and the rest did wiggle their long brown ears at the sight!

“So he had been spying on our frolic!” whispered Flap Ears with a giggle.

“Yes, he thought he’d have hare for supper. Why do you suppose he didn’t catch one of us, when he came so near?” asked Wriggly Nose, his eyes a-twinkle.

“Huh, he knew we could run the faster,” and Paddy Paws threw his chest out.

“He was waiting to knock you down the instant you came near enough,” said Mammy Cottontail, suddenly appearing in the midst of her little brood. “Don’t go too near! He might wake up at any minute!”

“Aw, come on,” urged Flap Ears to the younger bunnies. “I’ll bet you can’t jump as high as I can,” and he vaulted fully five feet into the air.

“Bravo,” said Mammy Cottontail. “That is as good as I could do myself!”

“I can leap farther,” boasted Wriggly Nose, and shooting like a coiled spring from the ground, he

landed a good ten feet away.

“They’ll soon be able to take care of themselves,” chuckled Daddy Cottontail, hopping over beside Mammy at this moment. “We must have more of these drills.”

“Yes,” whispered Mammy, “but don’t let ’em know it’s a part of their schooling. Let ’em think it’s only play, or they won’t take any pleasure in it.”

“Right!” agreed Daddy Cottontail. “The great secret of training the young is to make it play for them. Now when I was a youngster—”

He stopped to prick up his ears.

“What is it?” whispered Mammy, with an anxious eye on the little bunnies, who were now playing leap-frog with the hares from the other side of Pollywog Pond.

“Didn’t you get a sniff of something, just then, when the wind changed?” asked Daddy. “I could have sworn—there! A fox! A fox!” he signaled with that tap—tap—tap of his long hind legs that sounded so much like drumming on a hollow log.

Instantly every bunny in the glade had dashed to cover, and gone scuttling for home along the crookedest little rabbit road it could find.

For a Fox has sharper eyes than a bear, a keener nose and better ears, and on top of everything else, he can run as fast as the fastest hare that ever grew. At least, a large fox could, and even young Frisky Fox had grown into a foe worth keeping at a distance.

For the taint on the wind was that of Frisky Fox, out on a little spree of his own.





XXVIII
A BOY AND A BEAR

Human ears are never so sharp as those of the wood folk who have to live by their wits. So when the Boy from the Valley Farm heard nothing, and saw nothing, he concluded there was nothing there.

But Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, was following him none the less, half fearful and half curious to see what this two-legged creature might be up to in his woods.

It was a pleasant afternoon, with just enough of a haze to subdue the sunlight. The rain had left the earth fresh and green in the open patches, and the air was sweet with the perfume of Steeple Bush and Joe Pye Weed and pink Sweet Clover. From away down by the meadow back of the Farm came the tinkle of a cowbell, the only sound to break the stillness, save the faint lapping of the river against a boulder.

The Boy stopped beside a pool half-shadowed by an overhanging log. His sharp eyes could just make out a big fat trout that lay headed up-stream, lazily fanning the water with his fins, to keep himself in position.

Now Twinkly Eyes, who had concealed himself in a clump of bushes a little downstream, began to see the meaning of the long black pole with the line

dangling from the end of it.

First the Boy took a tin can from his pocket, a can with holes punched in the top. Selecting a fat white angle worm, of a sort that the little Black Bear well knew grew in the wet places, he fastened it on his hook and dangled it before the trout. But to no avail! That canny fellow knew perfectly that no such worms of soft fat whiteness were ever found in his stream. The kind of worms he sometimes found when there was a cave-in from the bank were strong, slim black ones.—He refused even to nibble.

The Boy next tried a cricket, then a grasshopper, and finally a fat white grub—but with the same result. Then, quite by chance, he chose a black worm.

But before he cast it, he saw a shining green turtle about as big around as a good-sized crab-apple floating about, just a little upstream. And carefully laying his pole along the bank, he made a grab for the fellow. That roiled the water, and although he didn't get the turtle, it was one of the luckiest things he could have done. For when he cast his worm into the pool again, the water was so muddy that the old trout thought, of course, the bank had caved in above there, and he made for that black bank-worm as if he had fasted for a week.

A tweak at the line, and the boy was so excited that he swung his fish fully two rods through the air, landing him in the very bush behind which Twinkly Eyes was hiding!

The little Black Bear gave a start of surprise, and for just one instant his head was exposed to the boy's startled gaze.



XXIX
THE TABLES ARE TURNED

The Boy from the Valley Farm held his head high with pride.

For had he not—on the self-same day—landed a big fat trout and seen a bear cub!

That would certainly be something to tell at home, even for a backwoods boy! His mouth watered as he thought of the way his mother would broil his fish.

But alas, for the best laid plans of mice and men! When he found the place where he had landed his catch, there was no fish there. Could it be that he had only dreamed he caught it? But no, here was its tail on the trampled ground. Someone had stolen it. But who? That was the question!

Why, of course, the little Black Bear whom he had startled out of the underbrush!

“The rascal!” exclaimed the Boy, half amused, half crest-fallen. Well, I only hope he needed it more than I did.

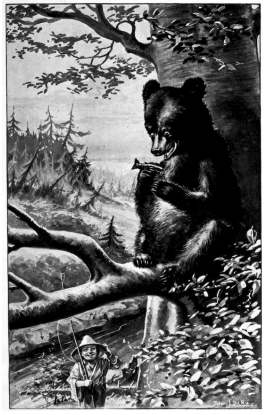
“Now I suppose they will never believe me at home when I tell of my big catch.” He started whistling ruefully, as he set about mending his broken horsehair line, which had got badly tangled in the bushes.

Then his eye fell on something that made him

pause, wide-eyed. Being a backwoods boy, he was almost as keen at reading the signs about him as were the wood folk themselves—that is, so far as he was able! Of course his nose and ears were very much less sharp than theirs, but he had even better eyes than most of them.

Here was evidence his eyes could not deny, though he reached out and felt of it to be sure. One fin of his stolen trout lay caught in the very top of a hazel bush.

“Now, how on earth did that get there?” he asked himself. People who are much alone are very apt to talk to themselves. “If that cub ate the fish down here, where the ground is trampled, how did he come to drop the fin in a bush higher than his head?”



“Oh you rascal!” shouted the boy, in delight

—Page 89

Then a bright idea popped into his mind. “Why, of course, it must have dropped from above. A sly fellow like that wouldn’t have stopped to eat his fish down here. He’s carried it up in the top of some tree where he could feast in peace. I’ll bet it was this very tree I’m standing under—for how else could the fin have fallen on top of the bush?” He raised his eyes to peer into the green shadows of the tree-top.

There, sure enough—so high that the Boy’s sharp eyes could barely make him out against the tree trunk, sat Twinkly Eyes astride a limb, and between his clever forepaws he held what must have been the last of the trout.

“Oh, you rascal!” shouted the boy, in delight. “I’ll get you for that!”



XXX
A CLIMBING MATCH

"You Scalawag!" the Boy kept laughing, as he stared at Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, in the top of the beech tree.

"So it was you who stole my fish?"

But Twinkly Eyes said never a word. He just sat still, like a bump on a log, in the hope that the Boy might yet be deceived into thinking him only a blackened limb.

But the Boy from the Valley Farm was not to be deceived. He, and his father before him, had lived all their lives in the north woods where footprints are very clear—and the little Bear's footprints led straight to the tree.

Moreover, he had long been wishing he might catch a cub for a pet. Therefore, he started to climb the tree.

Twinkly Eyes, who did not know the kindness of the Boy's intentions—and who certainly would not have wanted to be caught if he had—decided it was time to show fight.

"Whoof! Whoof!" he growled, slapping his heavy paws on the tree trunk.

"You can't scare me!" laughed the Boy. "You're nothing but a yearling cub. And I'm the best wrestler

at the Cross-roads School!" And on he came regardless.

Now here was where ignorance was bliss. For while it was true that cubs have been caught and tamed, the Boy from the Valley Farm had much to learn about how it is done. And there was one thing he did not know.

He did not know that if it came to a wrestling match with Twinkly Eyes, the Boy would be the one to get very much the worst of it all. The cub was so small and cunning, so like an over-grown Newfoundland puppy, that the Boy would not have believed, had you told him, what a scrapper he could be.

Grown bears the Boy feared, but this little fellow didn't look the least bit dangerous as he clung to his tree-top. And the Boy was only fourteen. That is to say, he held the firm belief that he could lick his weight in wildcats—to say nothing of bear cubs.

It was well for the Boy from the Valley Farm that Twinkly Eyes had no mind to let him try it.

Yes, sir, it was lucky for that Boy!

As it was, no sooner had he scrambled painfully half way up the trunk than Twinkly Eyes climbed to the very topmost branch; and as the Boy still came after him, he crept so near the tip that it swayed beneath his weight. Here he felt sure the Boy could not follow, and his courage returning with a bound, he turned to "Whoof!" at his pursuer.

"Ho! ho!" laughed the Boy from the Valley Farm. "I can shake you off, you rascal, if that's your game." For you see his natural kindness was forgotten in the thrill of the chase, and he was bound and determined now to have that bear.



XXXI
THE BEAR GETS THE BEST OF IT

Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, had crept to the end of the drooping limb with an air of—

"Now catch me if you can!"

"You funny little rascal," laughed the Boy from the Valley Farm, as he hitched himself astride the other end of the limb.

"I'm going to wait right here till you get tired of it. So you might as well make up your mind to getting caught. You won't mind in the least, though, once you find out what it's like to be tame. I'll bring you all the fish you can eat. Sweet corn, too! And every time you learn to do a trick I'll give you a lump of maple sugar. How'll you like that, sir?" And the Boy fished a lump of his favorite sweet from his overalls pocket and held it out to the cub.

But he received no response from the other end of the limb.

Indeed, had the cub really understood what the Boy was saying, the result would have been no different. For freedom means more to a wilderness creature than life itself. Better a dinner of bark and his freedom than a banquet of honey served at the end of a rope, Twinkly Eyes could have told him.

Then an idea came to him. He began shaking the

limb to which clung the cub. He shook and shook, till he was tired—but the harder he swung the limb, the tighter clung the little Black Bear to the swaying tip.

The lump of maple sugar dropped from the Boy's busy fingers. The cub gazed after it with a hungry sniff, then—as easily as a bag of meal—he dropped to the ground, grabbed the sugar, and made off with it between his jaws.

The Boy stared in surprise, then let himself slide down the trunk. But fast as he came, the little bear was faster, and all he found for his afternoon's adventure were the boy-like tracks of the padded feet, with their doglike claws, as they galloped away down the wet river bank.

"Well, I declare!" said the Boy. "If you haven't got the best of me again, you clever rascal!"

But he didn't give up the chase. Not for an instant. The cowbell found him deaf, and for once the supper hour was forgotten. For now he wanted nothing on earth so much as to catch that cub.

Following the broad footprints till they turned off among the thick pine needles, he fell to his knees to study the ground for signs of the little bear's trail.



XXXII
THE LITTLE BEARS GO FISHING

Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, galloped across the pine needles as noiselessly as a shadow.

His drop from the tree-top had taken only a second, while the Boy had used up fully half a minute sliding down the trunk. So that, by the time the Boy began looking for footprints, the bear was away up stream in the top of another tree, peacefully licking up the ants from the bark.

Meantime the Boy from the Valley Farm was running into a danger of which he little dreamed.

Being a backwoods boy, he knew that a mother bear with cubs is a person to avoid. But he did not know that Mother Black Bear had brought her two new cubs to the very stream along which he was searching for footprints.

True, they were on the other side of the river. And the wind was blowing in quite the wrong direction, so that Mother Black Bear's nose could not warn her of his approach. Thus, if he kept on the way he was headed, he was due to stumble upon the little family very soon, and give both them and himself an unpleasant surprise.

For Mother Black Bear was mighty touchy where her cubs were concerned. She was in a mood these

days for clawing anyone who so much as looked at them, so precious were the two fat babies to her.

The last red glow of the setting sun was glinting off the river between the shadows of the trees. And Mother Black Bear was catching fish. The two fat, roly-poly cubs, Twinkly's baby sisters, sat on the bank and watched gravely, while their mother waded in up to her neck, paddling so carefully downstream that she scarcely made a ripple in the mirror that it made. A trout might well have taken her for a log floating gently with the current.

Her arms she held well down to her sides with claws spread. Suddenly she felt a smooth form glide against her side! With one swift clutch of her curved iron claws she had her fish, and was flinging it ashore to the babies.

The next fish she carried ashore in her jaws for her own supper. Then back she led the cubs up-stream to where the riffles glittered in the sunset red. Here, standing perfectly still in the shallow water, she waited till a trout came by, when with one sharp blow on the head she finished his career.

Meantime, where was the Boy from the Valley Farm?

Deciding at length that it was getting too dark to see foot-prints, he became aware that the cow-bell was again tinkling and remembered with a guilty pang that his father was probably waiting for the cows that minute.



XXXIII
TWINKLY AGAIN MEETS THE PORCUPINE

Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, cocked first one ear and then another.

There was certainly a buzzing somewhere that sounded mighty like the sound that honey bees made. The memory of his feast at the bee tree made him lick his chops in delight.

He followed the sound to the tree around which it centered, clambered up the trunk, and was soon following the particular limb on the end of which most of the “bees” were clustered.

Twinkly, after all, had had but one experience with bees, and it is not surprising that these insects should have fooled him.

True, he had not expected to find the honey out at the end of the branch inside a round gray ball. The time he had had that feast, the honey had been in a great mass of comb inside the hollow trunk.

But then, one never could tell. His ears told him that there were bees, and he always trusted more to his ears than his eyes.

But then, he trusted more to his nose than either of them,—at least generally.

At any other time he would have listened to the warning of his nose. This time he wondered why he

could not smell the honey as he had before. But perhaps he didn't want to be warned. He hoped so dreadfully that there was honey that he tried to persuade himself it was there, even if he couldn't smell it.

So on he went, straight to the end of the swaying limb! Then he sat down to think it over.

It was certainly very peculiar, that huge gray ball into which the "bees" were pouring. For while a few tried to sting the intruder and only got as far as his fur, so quiet had been his approach that most of them were going inside as if he had not been there. There is no animal in all the Deep Woods that can move as noiselessly as a little Black Bear when he wants to.

Finally, when every "bee" had gone into the gray ball through a little round hole, he cautiously put out one paw and tried to reach after them. But it was too small for him; he only succeeded in closing it so the "bees" couldn't get out. An angry buzz answered this move on his part.

Unk Wunk, the yearling porcupine, who had been watching from the tree across the way, gave a grunt of amusement.

"Those aren't bees," he jeered. "Those are wasps. So you won't find any honey. I'd hate to be in your place when you take your paw off that hole!"

"Hello, there," grinned Twinkly Eyes. "I'm not afraid!"

He really thought Unk Wunk was trying to drive him away from his find in order to enjoy it himself. He didn't believe for an instant that it was really a nest full of angry wasps he had imprisoned.

XXXIV
A GOOD SPORT

“No, sir, I’m not afraid,” said Twinkly Eyes, the Little Black Bear.

He suspicioned that Unk Wunk the porcupine had been trying to drive him away from his find, as he had from Lone Lake, in order to enjoy it himself. For Twinkly Eyes really believed that he was in a bee tree.

What else could these buzzing insects be, he asked? And where bees were, there was honey. His mouth watered at the thought.

The only peculiar thing about it was that the bees should have gone into this huge gray ball that hung from the end of the limb. Twinkly held his paw over the opening, keeping his “bees” prisoners, while he thought it over.

If it should prove to be wasps—whatever THEY were—how Unk Wunk would jeer at him! He wished the little porcupine would go away instead of sitting there watching with that spiteful gleam in his little black eyes.

But Unk Wunk had no intention of going away. While he did not care to go to the trouble of taking the impudent scamp down a peg, he told himself he would just as soon the wasps did it for him. So he

settled himself comfortably on his limb to watch what would happen when Twinkly took his paw off the hole in the wasp's nest.

"I suppose that pin-cushiony fellow is just aching to see me get hurt," Twinkly told himself. "But I shan't let him know, if I do.

"So far as I can figure it out, there are about six chances to half a dozen that this is wild honey, and I'm going to take one of the six on it!"

With an extra screw to his courage and a great show of enjoyment for Unk Wunk's benefit, the little Black Bear tore open the wasps' nest.

Out poured the angry insects by the hundreds!

But Twinkly took his medicine without a yelp to betray to Unk Wunk that he minded.

XXXV
BOBBY LYNX LEARNS A LESSON

Now Bob Kitten, Madam Lynx's young hopeful, was due to have an experience that he would not forget in a hurry.

Never yet had he so much as crossed the trail of any creature he could not get the best of with tooth and nail, if he did not paralyze it with his terrifying howl. He therefore assumed that there was no one anywhere that he need fear.

But one night when the moon rose round and yellow from behind the firs, Bob Kitten heard that curious gnawing again, and this time it came from right above his head, in a birch tree. Not only that, but he got a whiff of the most tantalizing scent! It simply made his mouth water!

He peered into the tree-top, his round eyes gleaming through the shadow in which he stood. There was a dark ball swaying far out on a slender bough, and it did not look the least bit for-mid-able.

Bob let out his blood-curdling yowl, hoping that the thing might be so scared it would drop right down at his feet, and save him the trouble of climbing; but the dark ball never moved a muscle. It simply hung there gnawing the bark as if it hadn't a care in the world.

This angered Bob, and he was up in that birch tree, and out on the swaying branch, without even stopping to think. One blow of his heavy paw, and the creature would be felled to earth!

But still the round ball did not even glance up from its gnawing. The impudence of it, thought Bob! Didn't the creature even know enough to be afraid? He crept nearer. Now he could see the rather mild-looking face and the fat, hairy body ending in a stubby, pointed tail. Its hair was certainly coarse looking, gleaming lighter on the ends in the moonlight. He had never seen fur like that before.

Suddenly there was rattle as of so many dry twigs clacking together, and the round ball suddenly fluffed itself out to twice its size, confronting Bob with every quill erect. For it was a young porcupine Bob had trapped in this awkward position, and he simply tucked his face down between his paws till he was all bristles, and waited.

And Twinkly Eyes, the yearling cub, also waited, in the shelter of a neighboring ironwood tree. For this was Unk Wunk, his old enemy of the swimming hole.

This would have been an excellent time for Bob to have revised his plan of action. But ignorance was bliss,—and with a yell of defiance, he struck out at his adversary.

The next instant he gave voice to a howl of pain, for his sensitive paw struck a handful of quills,—and it was exactly like slapping at the points of so many needles. Nay, worse, as Bob was to find,—for each punishing quill was barbed at the end.

Bob's reaction came with the swiftness of unreasoning instinct. With one lunge he was down on the branch below, and traveling earthward as fast

as three sets of powerful claws would let him.



“He gave voice to a howl of pain”

—Page 106

Bob certainly felt as if he had been shot, as he scuttled back to earth with paw smarting from the slap he had given the little brown ball in the tree-top. And for days to come, he was to nurse a foot that was so sore he went on three legs, and picked out the soft spots.

He needed no further teaching to keep his distance, when he saw a harmless black ball gnawing a supper of birch bark, or lying all humped up like a mammoth chestnut burr. No, decidedly, Unk Wunk had nothing further to fear from Bob.

It was from quite another quarter that he had to be on guard.



XXXVI
TWINKLY WATCHES AGAIN

The little Black Bear was non-plussed. Surely it would be rash to try to punish Unk Wunk. But young Frisky Fox was like many another youngster. He wanted to find out for himself. Therefore, one night when Mother Red Fox had taken the pups all out for a hunt, Frisky had caught a whiff of that tan-ta-liz-ing smell that had made Bob's mouth water.

"Hurry! There's our supper now!" he had yipped joyously.

"Sh!—Do you want to scare everything within earshot?" Mother Red Fox had whispered, as she nipped his ear. "Besides, that's nothing we can eat at this time of year."

"Why not?" insisted Frisky, though under his breath, for his mother was still within nipping distance. "It smells perfectly great!"

"It tastes great, too! But we can't catch porcupines at this time of year, I tell you; it takes deep snow to catch them."

This satisfied him for the moment. But as they came nearer and nearer to the tempting odor, he sniffed and sniffed till he could hardly stand it. Then suddenly he saw where it came from, just a little dark lump on the ground—that's all it was! It didn't

look in the least like a creature that could run away.

“Why, I could catch that fellow myself, just as easily as not!” he told himself. “I wonder why on earth mother thought I couldn’t? I’d just like to show her, anyway!” And he felt strongly tempted to slip on ahead and try it.

He did, in fact, tiptoe along behind a fallen log, till he came to a little clump of bushes right beside the porcupine. And there he stood watching and listening, and wondering for all he was worth why he couldn’t leap right on the creature and set his teeth in his throat. And the little Bear watched too!

But Unk Wunk was also listening, and no sooner had he detected the faint snap of a tiny twig down the hillside than he tucked his head under his paws and doubled up under his prickles, and there wasn’t so much as an inch of him that anyone could get at.

Frisky stared and stared at the strange creature. Here was that delicious-smelling supper right at his very feet, but—could Mother Red Fox have been right after all?



XXXVII
FOXY COUNSEL

"He who fights and runs away
Lives to fight another day."

But young Frisky Fox didn't even fight. He just ran away!

Yes, sir, there was something about that prickly ball, about the way the quills rattled as he curled up tighter, that sounded ominous.

It was just this habit of looking the situation over before he leaped that was to make Frisky so much wiser than some of his neighbors.

"ALWAYS LEAVE PORCUPINES STRICTLY ALONE," his mother scolded, as he went trotting back after her, crestfallen and shamefaced.

"At the first touch, that fellow would have snapped his tail in your face, and you'd have got a handful of quills in your mouth or some place where it would have been a mighty serious matter.

"Yes, sir-ee! It would have been a mighty serious matter!

"You couldn't have rubbed them out, for every move you made would only have driven them deeper, what with their barbed tips, till you'd be lucky if they didn't finish you once and for all."

“My!” gasped the Red Fox pup.

“Next time,” Mother Red Fox continued, rather rubbing it in, “you’d do well to take your mother’s word for a thing.

“There, now!—Listen to that!”

Frisky pricked up his ears. From back up the slope of Mount Olaf, where he had come so near making a fatal mistake, there sounded a rattling as of dry twigs. It was Unk Wunk shaking his quills.

“Unk Wunk! Unk Wunk! Unk Wunk!” he was muttering over and over to himself. “I just guess people had better leave me alone, if they know what’s good for them!”

And through the moonlit woods, still in their April nakedness, the Fox family could plainly see a dark, round form slowly and deliberately climbing into a birch tree, where it resumed its gnawing.

“Whew! He’s not afraid of anything! Guess I’ll keep away from his part of the woods!” breathed Frisky Fox a bit unsteadily. For he could not help imagining how it would be to have his face full of quills. “But who’d ever think to look at him he could be so dangerous?”

“He’s dangerous only when you attack him,” explained Mother Red Fox, seating herself with the youngsters in a half circle before her.

“He wouldn’t touch you if you didn’t come too near. He never goes out of his way an inch to make trouble. He’s far too fat and lazy. He just simply goes his way in peace unless someone tries to molest him.

“Even then he just waits, all curled up like a burr, knowing there isn’t the least bit of danger so far as he himself is concerned. That is, except when there is deep snow on the ground, and a fellow can sneak up

underneath him, and grab where there are no quills.

"Otherwise he knows there isn't a creature in all these woods but would get the worst of it—with the exception, possibly, of Twinkly Eyes, the bear."

XXXVIII
A JOLLY WORLD

Now there wasn't a creature in all the Deep Woods that wouldn't have had the worst of it in an encounter with Unk Wunk, the porcupine—unless possibly Twinkly Eyes.

And even Twinkly would be hurt as badly as anyone, were he to get a handful of quills slapped into his face with Unk Wunk's punishing tail. But Twinkly Eyes had a way of managing an encounter that was all his own.

In the first place, he had always found the world such a jolly place to live in that his little black eyes twinkled at whatever they looked at. It was such fun to climb trees and see what was going on round about him, as he nibbled buds or shook down beech nuts.

He never had one bit of trouble getting down, because when he was ready he just let go and slid, landing like a rubber ball. That was the way he took life generally!

Then there were other delightful things to do. For one thing, there was fishing in Pollywog Pond. It was full of frogs at this time of year, while as for fish!—Um! There was nothing to beat them. Not even the delicious sour ants that he sometimes found beneath loose bark.

The Deep Woods were simply full of enticing things to do, and Twinkly Eyes had the happiest kind of time all day long. Nor was he all appetite. There was much that interested him that had nothing whatever to do with getting a square meal. In fact, he had a lively bump of curiosity, had Twinkly Eyes.

But while curiosity is a great thing to have, if you want to learn what is going on around you, it is also rather dangerous at times, as we shall see. On this particular evening, no sooner had the great red sun began to disappear behind the fir trees than Twinkly sauntered forth to take the air and see what the prospects were for supper. Sleeping nearly all day as he did, up there in his den on Mount Olaf, he seldom came out much before dusk, and it was even later that Twinkly suddenly stopped in his tracks to sniff.

There was certainly a tantalizing odor in the air,—for those that have noses as sharp as have the Forest Folk.

What could it be?

He climbed a log and sniffed again. It seemed to come from the top of that old beech tree! He stood on his hind legs and peered through the budding branches.

Then suddenly he heard a low, monotonous grunting. “Unk, Wunk! Unk Wunk!” that came from a dark hump as round and fat and care-free as if winter had never been,—for the porcupine does not sleep in winter, but climbs the trees as the snow mounts higher, and eats his fill of their bark.

Peering far up into the beech tree, Twinkly Eyes could see a surly-looking fellow that rattled his quills as he moved, with a sound like dry twigs crackling one against another.

The fellow was the same who had laughed when

the little Bear got into the wasps' nest. He was the same young porcupine, what is more, who had driven Twinkly Eyes from the Lone Lake swimming hole the summer before, when Unk Wunk had had his mother to help him!

XXXIX
WHO WILL BE SORRIEST

"Never trouble trouble
Till trouble troubles you."

At least that is a mighty good plan where porcupines are concerned.

And Twinkly Eyes knew that as well as he knew how to climb. But that odor was so terribly inviting, and Twinkly had such a score to settle that he could hardly resist poking his nose in where he knew he had no business.

Sometimes young folks will do that way. They just can't help it; and they always come out of the experience wiser than they were before,—provided, of course, that they come out of it at all.

"He's certainly fat enough, if it IS the spring of the year!" thought Twinkly Eyes, hungrily, as he watched Unk Wunk away up in the beech tree, chiseling off the rough outer bark to nibble the juicy inner layer. "He can make a meal off of anything."

"I wonder—" and Twinkly's eyes began to dance more mischievously than ever, "I just wonder, now, if I could shake that saucy fellow off! It certainly would be a peck of fun to see him come tumbling down like a chestnut burr right on his own quills!"

And the little Black Bear fairly rolled off the log in

his excitement. Picking himself up as softly as he could and tiptoeing over till he stood just beneath the gnawing one, huddled up there in the moonlight with a glint on the tip of every quill, Twinkly Eyes began, oh, ever so cautiously, to climb the beech tree.

He would climb just as high as he possibly could without getting in reach of Unk Wunk's terrible barbed tail, and then he would shake the tree, and perhaps the prickly one would lose his hold and go pelting to the ground—like a great chestnut burr!

Now, as always when one's nerves are at a tension, Twinkly Eyes was conscious of all the little sounds and odors about him. It certainly was a jolly world to be taking such a risk in. From away down the mountainside in Pollywog Pond, his sharp ears could just make out the croak-croak, croak-croak of the frogs as they called to one another or gossiped back and forth through the April night. And from farther still—from the Valley Farm, perhaps, came the faint fragrance of wood smoke where the pasture lot had been burned over a bit recklessly.

"Unk Wunk, Unk Wunk!" said the dark form above him, but without really being aware of any one but himself. So confident was the little porcupine that no one in all that wilderness could harm him, no matter how they tried, that he didn't even take the trouble to look beneath him.

Twinkly Eyes drew a long breath and began to shake the tree. Unk Wunk went on gnawing, quite as if it had been no more than a passing breeze that had swayed him. Twinkly drew another breath and shook the harder, then dodged back to the opposite side of the trunk from Unk Wunk, prepared to watch the fall.

But still nothing happened. The self-confident one simply kept on clinging with his long nails that had held him safe through many a wind-storm, even, sometimes, when their owner slept.

Suddenly he turned his head. His narrow little eyes looked Twinkly over coolly, even indifferently. There was a bit of tender-looking bark just below him, and he began slowly descending.

Twinkly's heart beat faster. What should he do?



XL
TWINKLY EYES PLAYS SAFE

Twinkly Eyes was certainly put to it to know what to do.

He had planned simply to shake the beech tree till Unk Wunk should fall off. Then one of two things would happen. Either he would crack like a chestnut burr, and supper would be an easy matter, or else it would be a fight on level ground, where Twinkly knew a trick or two.

But to have Unk Wunk turning on him in this fashion! It was not at all the situation that he had counted on. For Unk Wunk wouldn't for an instant stop going wherever he wanted to go. Certainly not for a little black bear whose face he could slap with a tailful of barbed quills if said bear got too fresh.

Up to this moment Twinkly Eyes had never dreamed that a porcupine would actually turn on any one that hadn't even touched him yet.

As an actual fact, the prickly one had no intention of striking Twinkly Eyes. He had simply been un-a-ware of his presence up to that very moment, and unless the little Bear made a hostile move, he certainly wouldn't be the first one to attack.

Should Twinkly make a sudden move in his direction, though, he'd turn his back like lightning

and slap, slap his armored tail, driving whatever might be in its way full of quills. One slap would be more than enough.

However that may be, Twinkly made a sudden resolution, and it didn't take him as long to carry it out as it does to read about it. He just let go and came down! Yes, sir, Twinkly just let go and slid! No careful searching for a foot hold, not even hand-over-hand work—nothing but ker-biff! And the little Black Bear had bounced down on his own fat self like a rubber ball, and out from under that beech tree, as fast as if Unk Wunk were going to try to drop on him —Yes, sir, he was somewhere else before you could have said Jack Robinson! Something deep inside him had suddenly decided there was more fun in playing safe.

Twinkly always came down that way, falling perfectly limp, like a fat butter ball, and it never hurt him any more than it would to roll off a log.

And it wasn't till he was half way down the mountain-side that he remembered he was hungry.

"Hoo-wuff!" he sighed as he slowed down for breath, once more catching the croak-croak from Pollywog Pond. "That was a most amazing fellow! I'm not surprised that people keep their distance. I'd rather starve than try that again, anyway,—at least I think I would.

"I wonder, though—how I wonder what he would do if I were to find him some day just plodding along the ground, and I were to flip a clod of earth at him? I really am curious to see what would happen, the old slow-poke! By ginger, I've half a mind to try it!"

XLI
TWINKLY EYES GETS A GREAT SURPRISE

Twinkly Eyes was certainly as full of curiosity as a pond is of frogs. And though he went on and caught himself a nice dinner in Pollywog Pond, he wondered all the way why Unk Wunk was such a curious fellow, and what he would do if he were provoked.

The idea of his going on gnawing as if nothing had happened, with Twinkly shaking the tree for all he was worth! And then to stare down at his tormentor with that cold in-dif-fer-ence! It was too much for Twinkly Eyes.

No sooner had he filled his tummy comfortably full than his courage all came back to him, and he determined to go back and get a rise out of that old grizzly grouch.

These things he turned over and over in his curious mind, as he padded noiselessly back along the furtive trail, his eyes twinkling at a little plan that began forming in the back of his head. It would be worth trying, just to see what would happen.

Suddenly swish, thump, thumpety-thumpety-bump, came something straight down the side of a ledge!

Twinkly's first thought was that it must be a man, for certainly no Forest Folk would make such an out-

ra-geous racket. Even a bear could pad along through the underbrush without more than cracking a twig, while as for foxes and rabbits and owls, and even lynxes, if they made that much noise just once, they'd deserve to have all their enemies come on the run!

No, assuredly, it must be some creature that had no place in the wilderness; and as it was coming altogether too near his line of march, he decided to climb the nearest tree and wait till he saw what the excitement was all about.

Bang, bump, thump, came the sounds again. Then something struck a clump of high-bush blueberry bushes in a way that crushed them flat, and a great ragged ball of dry oak leaves emerged, with a sound of scraping and crackling that was quite unlike anything Twinkly Eyes had ever heard before.

It went on a little farther, then brought up against a boulder. Eyes fairly popping with curiosity, Twinkly slid down his tree-trunk, bounding off into a covert of low bushes, from which he might peer at the astounding mass at the foot of the boulder.

After a time it began unrolling, and gradually out of the turmoil appeared none other than Unk Wunk, the porcupine, who proceeded to stretch his legs and yawn, quite as if nothing had happened.

"If that is his usual method of traveling," thought Twinkly Eyes, "I'd rather not meet him, that's sure. Wonder who was after him that time. I'll bet he never intended to do all that rolling. Or is that just one of his queer ways?"





XLII
TWINKLY EYES PLOTS MISCHIEF

"A rolling stone gathers no moss."

But Unk Wunk was just the opposite. In his roll down hill he had gathered several pecks of moss and leaves on the points of his quills.

Porcupines always do go by contraries.

And Twinkly Eyes, the Bear, was no sooner convinced that that great jagged mass of dry leaves was his foe of the swimming hole experience than his little black eyes began twinkling more merrily than ever. For here was opportunity knocking at his very door.

Now Twinkly Eyes was different to this extent from most of the folk that lived in the deep woods. He had a sense of humor.

To Mammy Cottontail and her brood, life was one perpetual effort to escape the jaws and claws and beaks and bills of the enemies on every side. The mere matter of finding enough to eat had its dangers.

While young Frisky Fox occasionally smiled at his own cleverness, it took the fat little bear to find amusement in everything that happened. In the first place, he was thus far afraid of nothing under all the wide blue sky. He was so much stronger and better-armed than almost any other creature in the

wilderness!

True, he wasn't as well armed as Bobby Lynx, but then, Bobby had no desire to dine off of any one that could fight like Twinkly Eyes. So, being unafraid, Twinkly could enjoy life. And being happily able to eat almost anything that came his way with relish, he had time to spare for play.

Just now, as he approached that bristling ball of oak leaves that had come so near to rolling square upon him, his little black eyes danced with mischief. Twinkly had a plan whereby he meant to have some fun at the prickly one's expense!

He waited till Unk Wunk, indifferent to his presence, had stretched his legs and begun lazily gnawing the tree trunk that was nearest to his nose. "Unk Wunk, Unk Wunk!" he began to sing in his two monotonous notes. "Here I am again, right side up with care, and I don't care the flip of my tail who sees me, nor what they try to do with me. Because I'm dead sure they'll get the worst of it every time."

"Woo-huff!" snorted Twinkly Eyes, sitting up on his haunches. "Sure and I'm going to find that out for myself! I'll bet I know a trick that will take you down a peg, you old grouch, you! I saw my mother do it once last year, and I've never had so much fun since."

With this, to which the porcupine paid not the slightest attention, Twinkly arose and began padding cautiously forward. For a few minutes he stood directly over the gnawer, but Unk Wunk accorded him not even the glance of an eye.



XLIII
TWINKLY TEASES UNK WUNK

Little did Unk Wunk dream of the trick that was being plotted against him, as he sat there lazily gnawing at the root of the handiest tree.

To be sure he knew that Twinkly Eyes was there. He was not that stupid. Only he felt so thoroughly entrenched beneath his quills that he never even dreamed that the little Black Bear would dare to attack him.

Indeed, if worst came to worst, could he not remove himself with the same speed with which he had just rolled down hill? That had been pure accident. Curling up at the approach of some prowler of the night,—he had not troubled to find out who,—he had suddenly lost his balance, and gone hurtling down the slope in the manner that had so startled Twinkly Eyes. It just made one more trick in his bag! For his bones were fatly padded, and he simply found himself in another place as good as the one he had left.

So once more he began creaking contentedly in his nasal voice his never ending chorus “Unk Wunk, Unk Wunk, Unk Wunk!”

Life certainly looked good from the porcupine standpoint, now that the trees were full of sap, and the great round yellow moon shown softly through

the budding branches, lighting up every cranny of the forest floor.

The hylas in the marsh below chirped as musically as distant sleigh bells, reminding one that grass was lush and green, and there would be no more cold and snow,—nothing but one grand feast, more months than he could look ahead.

Beyond that, all he had to do was to keep quills out, and none could interfere with his pleasure.

But underneath, on the side where there were no quills,—as Twinkly Eyes suspected,—the little porcupine was as soft and vul-ner-able as any of the forest folk,—and it was this very fact that Twinkly meant to make the most of.

He therefore opened his offensive by flipping a clod of earth at the armored one. That had no visible effect, so he flipped a second. The third one struck the porcupine square on his unprotected nose, and Unk Wunk gave a grunt of annoyance, and started to transfer his person to a more distant tree.

Swift as thought, the little Bear thrust a cautious paw clear beneath one of the quilled sides, and with one blow hurled Unk Wunk against the tree trunk.





“Hurled Unk Wunk against the tree trunk”

—Page 132

XLIV
TWINKLY EYES GETS HIS

If Twinkly Eyes had thought for a moment that the matter was ended, he had reckoned without his host.

He might well have called it off with Unk Wunk's prob-able amaze-ment. But the little porcupine, though somewhat bruised, was still so set in his self-esteem that he could not imagine its happening a second time. And, feeling the need of an im-me-di-ate stim-u-lant, he once more uncurled from the ball he had doubled himself into in mid-air, and resumed his gnawing.

Imagine Twinkly Eyes' astonishment, as he turned, his shoulder all but dislocated from the force of the thrust, to find the enemy still in-dif-fer-ent to his presence!

Hot-headed now with the thrill of battle, he padded across to Unk Wunk, who happened quite by chance to be nearly en-trenched between his tree and a hollow log. Then, being nothing but a yearling cub, he quite forgot the caution with which he had once seen Mother Black Bear manage the ma-nœuv-re. Whereupon he flipped his clod again, hoping to drive the porcupine from behind his log, and with a neat success, for the clod landed plop on the pacifist's nose again!

With a squeak of righteous indignation, the quilled

one thrust his unprotected face into the hollow log, and there he waited! Even now he felt no fear, only a desire to punish, to fight for peace.

And Twinkly Eyes—rash fellow—lumbered closer, and once more thrust his paw beneath the porcupine. But this time he allowed himself to come too close.

Quick as lightning, slap, slap! Unk Wunk snapped his barbed tail back and forth, and Twinkly gave a howl of pain.

A handful of the torturing quills had im-paled the tormentor's scalp!

But for one chance this would have been the finish of the little Black Bear. It so happened that his head was down, and the quills struck directly over the hard bone of the skull. Into this they could not pen-e-trate. He was simply a bear with a mighty sore head. It was sore for long afterward, though with his good blood and the life of the open, it did finally heal, leaving him just a little scarred and more than a little chastened.

Henceforth Unk Wunk would be given a wide berth by one more of his neighbors.



XLV
BOBBY LYNX GOES FISHING

Now Twinkly's neighbor Bobby was a sadder but a wiser young lynx kitten before ever Whoo Lee the owl had finished with him. For Bobby had climbed to the nest in the pine tree, rash fellow!

It but put the finishing touches on his lesson when the bark to which he was clinging with his one free paw gave way beneath his weight and sent him tumbling.

Not that Bobby minded, after the first shock of falling. Like all members of the cat family, large and small, he managed to double into a somersault in mid-air and so came down right side up, more hurt in his feelings than anywhere else. Indeed, he twice broke his fall by catching at passing limbs, and he need not have come to the ground at all, save that he preferred not to occupy the same tree as Whoo Lee.

In fact, no sooner had Bobby reached all fours in safety than he went slinking off through the shadows, as fast as ever his heavy feet could carry him.

After a time he sat down to wash his face and lick the places where the owl had clawed him. Then he realized that he was very, very thirsty, and hungry to boot, and he made his way to Pollywog Pond.

Here, unfortunately, he found Mother Red Fox and Frisky Fox and the other four Fox youngsters just finishing a lesson in catching frogs, and he was in no mood for meeting any one of that family.

So on and on he crept, through the ravine and on down to Rapid River. Here his mother had once brought him to teach him to catch trout, and here, after drinking deep of the chill waters, he crouched along a boulder to await the dawn.

At the first faint flush of pink along the sky, the first lightening of the shadows of the forest, and the first wee notes of awakening warblers, Bobby stretched one paw out over the water's edge, claws set for a sudden swoop,—and waited silently.

For so long that Bobby all but went to sleep, his half-shut eyes could see no gleam of speckled scales in the silver water,—not, at least, within the reach of the waiting paw,—though that paw hung over the rim of one of the deepest pools, where trout were likeliest. The fish had to come pretty near the surface for him to strike successfully.

Then suddenly his mouth began to water, for a great fat beauty was swimming straight towards him. Bob's eyes gleamed hungrily, his whiskers twitched with nervousness, and the green muscles tensed along his ready forearm.

Then a quick dart of his barbed paw, a flash of silver, and Bob had squared himself with a growl to as juicy a breakfast as anyone could ask.

Great ravenous bites he took, growling as he crunched, to warn all comers that a hungry lynx is not the person from whom it would be wise to try to steal.

The next instant there was a resounding splash in the stream behind him, and Bob in his surprise

jumped full three feet in the air, landing on a limb of the nearest tree.

XLVI
A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

It is always annoying to be disturbed in the midst of one's breakfast,—the more so if one has just had a painful scrimmage with a great barred owl whose nest one was trying to rob.

It is therefore not surprising that Bobby Lynx looked murderously about him from the limb to which he had leaped at the sound of the splash.

It must have been a large animal, he reasoned, to make so much noise; and Bob was after all but a kitten, whose life had thus far been one long adventure from the day he had had it out with Unk Wunk, the porcupine, to his recent falling out with the angry owl.

Someone, he felt sure, meant to rob him of his trout, and, unfortunately, in his surprise he had left it on the boulder beside the River.

The trouble with Bob, and, indeed, the entire Lynx family, was that, although they are so strong and their claws and teeth so sharp, their eyes are little good to them. In the woods, where nearly every creature is colored like the tree trunks, they cannot see anything unless it moves.

Otherwise it would be too easy for a lynx to make his kill, and the grouse and the hares and the toads

and the meadow mice would have no chance at all in the game of life.

Not only were Bobby's eyes not good, but his nose wasn't half as keen as the noses of most wood-folks. He would walk right past a grouse hen without getting a smell of her.

That is why Bobby was always so alarmed when a sudden sound came from behind. He never knew what it might be until he saw the creature move.

This time he had not long to wait. A glossy form came ambling by, and Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, sat down on his haunches not ten feet away, to devour his catch. For he, too, had been fishing, and the splash that had startled Bobby was the sound of his great paw slapping through the water at his trout.

Bobby watched craftily from under a canopy of leaves, his gray-brown body flattened along the limb. Then convinced that Twinkly Eyes had no design on his person, he began to wonder if the intruder would try to make off with his fish.

But the little Bear knew the law of the wilderness as well as any one. He knew that to steal another's catch would mean a fight if the owner caught him. Though he could not see the hidden claimant of the half-eaten trout, his nose was keen enough to tell that another's scent clung to the rock on which it lay, and he had no mind for calling that other's wrath upon his head.

He was just slouching past, pretending he did not see it, in order to fish farther up the stream, when there was a snarl and a splutter, as Bobby leaped, spitting and clawing back to his fish.

Twinkly stared at the strange creature, his little black eyes showing red lights, as he squared himself for the scrap that he feared would follow.

What had he done, anyway, to call forth such an exhibition of bad temper, he asked crossly with a growl deep down in his throat.

Then, too, Twinkly Eyes had never seen a lynx before, and the unknown is always to be distrusted.

XLVII
THE HIRED MAN DROPS A MATCH

What Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, could not know as he stared at Bobby Lynx crouched beside his fish was that Bobby was quite as much afraid as he was.

In fact, if the truth were known, Bobby Lynx was more afraid of Twinkly Eyes than Twinkly was of Bobby.

But, of course, it never does to show one's fear. So the two only glared at each other, green eyes staring into black, the bear cub poised on his hind legs ready for a wrestling match, the lynx kitten ready to spring should the other make a hostile move.

Then Twinkly Eyes began backing away, ever so gradually, while Bobby watched through half closed lids, a growl deep down in his throat and his bob tail lashing from side to side.

"What is the use?" Twinkly had asked himself. "I don't want his old fish, and I don't want to fight. This isn't my idea of going fishing at all! Though, of course, if no one had been there to claim that trout, I certainly shouldn't have let it go to waste."

Then suddenly both youngsters turned to sniff, as a new odor stole through the forest on the breath of the wind,—an odor so acrid and alarming that their

fear of each other was forgotten in the face of a common peril.

With the smell came a soft gray cloud floating through the aisles of trees from Pollywog Pond.

Here the timber was chiefly hardwood, though an occasional birch reached white arms up against the green, and a tangle of high-bush blueberries and wild blackberry vines grew densely to as high as Twinkly Eyes could see from on tiptoe.

It had been a dry spring in the region around Mount Olaf. For weeks there had been no rain, and though Rapid River still ran broad and full from the thaw, the hot sun had drunk up every drop of moisture it could draw from the forest floor of dead leaves and fallen branches.

On the very night that the Red Fox family had gone frogging at Pollywog Pond, and Unk Wunk the Porcupine had amused himself by rolling down hill, and Bobby Lynx had met Twinkly Eyes on a fishing trip, the Hired Man at the Farm had set forth an hour before cock-crow to set a line of skunk traps.

Following the Old Logging Road toward Pollywog Pond, he had paused on a fallen log to tie his shoestring and light his pipe, and as he rose he had given his match a shake and thrown it away.

Now of course the Hired Man meant to put his match out before he dropped it, but he didn't look behind him to make sure. No sooner was his back turned than a thin flame sprung up in the dead leaves beside the fallen log, and soon a healthy bonfire was snapping and curling around the log.

A white birch, with its paper bark, had caught a spark and started a red snake of flame that crept along the ground with the wind, first back towards the Farm, then around to the River. And before ever

the Hired Man could race back home for help, the fire had gained such headway that the whole area between the pond and the river was ablaze and the underbrush going like kindling.

It was the smoke of this red ruin that had so terrified both bear and lynx that they forgot their feud.



XLVIII
THE FOREST AFLAME

It takes a common peril to make people forget their hard feelings toward one another.

Bobby Lynx was quite as willing as Twinkly Eyes to overlook the little matter of the fish, once they had sniffed the acrid smoke that now came creeping between the aisles of trees.

It was not big as forest fires go, and the trees were mostly hardwood, which go slowly. But the fire lay between Bobby and home. It was to the Lynx kitten a peril new to his experience.

His first thought was concealment, and he leaped into a tall pine and clambered to the topmost branches that would hold him.

Twinkly Eyes, mere curiosity once the first shock of his alarm was past, went shambling through the underbrush to see whence came that pungent cloud.

What Bobby saw from his outlook was a wall of fire. This advanced rapidly on the freshening wind. It devoured the underbrush that covered the forest floor, and it all but outsped the creatures he dimly saw were fleeing before it.

Here leaping flames climbed to the very tree-tops on the arms of the paper birches, and even the hard pines gave up their deadwood and smaller branches.

Long arms of scarlet raced through the open patches, devouring the dead pine needles and dry oak leaves. Their snapping and crackling widened Bobby's eyes with terror as he flattened himself along his limb.

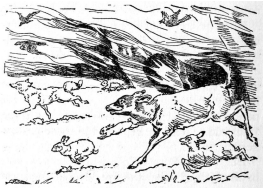
Soon, as Twinkly Eyes discovered before he had gone very far, the thickening smoke cloud was becoming uncomfortably hot. Its breath stung his nostrils and closed his eyes, and he gasped and stumbled, and finally turned back in one mad dash of terror.

Bobby turned to peer longingly across the river, which here stretched wider than he dared to swim.

He feared the water almost more than these unknown creatures of fire and smoke that seemed to be circling in on him now from every other side.

He crept stealthily down his pine tree on the side opposite the flames, and on to another that all but overhung the water, and there he lay, green eyes dilating nervously as he peered down at the scene around him.

Twinkly Eyes dashed first up-stream, then down, in his anxiety to get back to his den on Mount Olaf. For added to all his other troubles it was by now broad daylight, and he wanted to hide himself away and sleep till the shelter of the dark came round again. But there was no way out, and he took his stand at the edge of the water, eying the swift current, loath to venture the long swim to the other shore unless compelled to.



XLIX
IN THE FACE OF A COMMON PERIL

As the morning wore on, the wind grew stronger, blowing the leaping flames straight toward the river bank, where Bob and Twinkly Eyes huddled side by side in terror.

It was not a big fire, but it swept through the dry underbrush of the hardwood grove from Pollywog Pond to the plowed fields at the Valley Farm, and from the Old Logging road to the river.

Had the trees not been of hardwood, a fire might have started that would have eaten its way over miles of woodland. As it was, everyone at the farm turned out with wet gunny sacks to beat back every flame that leaped across the road as it wound from the pond on around at right angles to the river. It should at least be kept within those natural boundaries.

But to the Forest Folk whose homes were in the burned area, the fire seemed the most terrible thing that had ever happened to them. To those who crouched, waiting, on the bank of the river, the approaching flames and the long swim across the current to the opposite bank seemed equally impossible to face. Bobby Lynx, coughing and blinking in the acrid smoke, as he clung to the limb of his pine tree, felt, catlike, that it would scarce be

worse to stay where he was than to plunge into the water.

Twinkly Eyes, sitting like a black stump beneath, stared with amazement as a band of hares, cousins of Mammy Cottontail, came galloping madly before the racing flames. They were gasping for breath, their round eyes bulging in terror and their hearts beating like trip-hammers in their furry chests.

One scatter-brained brown bunny so far lost his wits as to circle around and go dashing straight back into the advancing fire, while another sought shelter fairly between Twinkly's black feet. But the little Bear was far too interested in the crackle of the flames to notice.

Almost on the heels of the hares loped Red Fox and his family, whom a sudden shift of the wind had cut off from safety. But they likewise gave the hares no more than a passing glance, but sat down opposite them at the river's brink to watch, and cough, and blink their smoke-stung eyes.

Next came Mother Red Squirrel and others of her kin, leaping from branch to branch above the smoking ground till they had taken up their places directly above the stream's edge.

Here, too, came Betty Bluebird and Conqueree the Blackbird, and Mother Grouse Hen, hurrying her fledglings along as best she could. Jim Crow and his black brothers, frightened from their nest in the top of the Pine, had gone soaring high above the smoke line, and so off to a point from which they could watch in safety.

There were other creatures, too, who sought haven along the River Bank. There was Writho the Black Snake, and Timothy Field Mouse, and Fleet Foot, the Spotted Fawn who had strayed too far from her

mother. The little deer huddled with the hares as far from Twinkly Eyes and Red Fox as they could crowd, without actually leaping off the bank.

The Red Squirrel family hid out of sight of both Bobby Lynx and Red Fox, and Timothy Field Mouse and his deadliest enemy, the Black Snake, both tried to hide in the same hole under the very nose of Red Fox, without any one of the three having a thought beyond their common peril.



L
WHILE THERE IS LIFE THERE IS HOPE

Yes, Sir, “while there is life there is hope!” But things certainly looked bad for Bobby Lynx and Twinkly Eyes and Red Fox and his family as the flames licked nearer and nearer through the circling trees.

The heat fairly seared their eyeballs, the smoke set them gasping every time the wind turned their way, and the huge sparks that now began to drop on their fur added pain to their terror.

Yet there was no way out, save the River which here ran wide and deep.

But if the larger animals were terror-stricken, imagine the feelings of Mother Red Squirrel’s family, and the brown bunnies, and Fleet Foot the Fawn, and Writho the Black Snake, and Timothy Field Mouse! For would they not escape the red flames and the cutting smoke but to furnish luncheon for their enemies, at whose very feet they crouched?

Of a sudden, as a blazing brand fell hissing beside Red Fox, he took a good grip on his resolution and plunged into the stream, and yelped to his family to follow. It was, after all, the only thing to do, as he had known for some time. His hesitation had lain in the fact of the puppies’ inexperience in the water. But after all, the youngsters of the wilderness could

nearly always swim, once they were forced to it. And there was Mother Red Fox and himself to help the pups along, should they become too tired to make the entire distance.

Young Frisky Fox splashed in like any healthy puppy, his fat legs paddling so energetically that he had little difficulty in keeping up with his father. There did come a moment, however, when he felt as if he would have to rest or sink, and with one of these sudden bright ideas that make the foxes the cleverest creatures in all the wilderness, he grabbed the tip of his father's plumy tail in his teeth and clung. The wiry fellow, from whom Frisky had inherited both strength and cunning, cut across the current and towed him to the shallow waters of the opposite bank.

Seeing Frisky, Mother Red Fox gave a sharp command to the youngest pup, while she towed him the same way. Then both parents swam back to aid the remaining youngsters, one by a timely word of encouragement, another by holding to his ear, and the third as they had aided the first two.

Seeing the Fox family making so valiantly for safety, Twinkly Eyes flung himself into their wake, and began gasping and snorting in his fight with the current. Bobby Lynx, half blinded by the smoke, peered vaguely at the sounds beneath his tree, then, with the courage of desperation, leaped far out into the unknown element.

But so ill do the great cats take to water that his head went under, and he felt that now surely it must be all up with him. Then, suddenly, he clutched at the little Bear's haunches and was half towed to shore.—Thus ended their quarrel!

LI
THE BOY FROM THE VALLEY FARM

Landed on the other shore, Twinkly hid in a tree-top to see what else he might see.

Now it often looks darkest just before daylight.

That was the way in this case. The little group of refugees on the shore were all but ready to leap into the river, preferring death by drowning, as the flames swept nearer through the underbrush, snapping and crackling and spitting red sparks.

The wind had veered upstream, driving the smoke with it, but the heat was fast becoming unbearable.

The brown bunnies, huddling close together in their terror, were not built to swim at all. Fleet Foot, the spotted fawn, was yet too young for the water, having indeed acquired the art of walking but a few days before. While Mother Grouse Hen could have flown across, her chicks could not, and she of course would not leave them.

All these stared with wide, hopeless eyes as the flames ate their way toward them. Their throats were parched and their hearts beat visibly.

Mother Douglas Squirrel and her family were perched on the very tipmost branch of the tree nearest the water, and there they raged and scolded. Shadow Tail measured the distance to the nearest

tree of the opposite shore, half tempted to try the leap at the risk of landing in mid-stream, but Mother Douglas was too wise to attempt it, for any squirrel with half an eye could have seen it was impossible.

Then, suddenly, up the stream came creaking a broad, flat-bottomed row-boat, and at its oar locks sat the Boy from the Valley Farm and his sister,—the Little Girl on one side of the broad seat, he on the other.

The two children being too small to aid the men with the fire-fighting, back along the Old Logging Road, had ventured up here on their own account, to see if any sparks had leaped across the river to the dry timber on the other side. Once they had seen a flying brand which the Boy had gone ashore to quench with mud from the river's bank.

Now they rounded the bend just in time to see Twinkly Eyes, the little Black Bear, and his passenger, Bobby Lynx, climb up the farther bank and dart off to hiding.

"Oh, see!" cried the Girl, pityingly, as she saw the group on the river bank.

"Let's get 'em!" proposed the Boy.

"Let's!" agreed the Girl, and the pair rowed swiftly up the doomed right bank and began grabbing the trembling hares by their long brown ears, dropping them into the bottom of the boat.

Once the leaders were aboard, some sign seemed to go the rounds, and the rest of the bunnies did not wait for assistance, but went scuttling over the side of the boat so fast that the children could scarce find a place to put their feet.

At that instant a flaming branch fell hissing almost into the boat.

“Pull out, quick!” gasped the Boy, swinging the boat around.

“Oh, but the Fawn!” wailed the Girl. “We can’t leave the Fawn!”

“We’ve got to!” commanded the boy, sternly, “or that whole tree will be down on us!”



LII
TWINKLY'S FELLOW REFUGEES

The Boy's judgment told him it was not safe for them to linger a moment longer so near the racing flames. Any moment the wind might shift and blind them with its yellow smoke cloud, and it was hard enough at best for the children to handle the heavy row-boat.

But there stood Fleet Foot, her broad ears turned inquiringly at the newcomers, whom she was too young to fear, her great velvet eyes round with terror and her pink nose twitching nervously.

She was tinier than a three weeks' calf, and nothing could have been lovelier than her white-spotted red-brown coat shading into light tan on throat and chest.



"He lifted her bodily
into the boat"

—Page 161

The Boy dropped his oar again and stepped ashore, while his sister held the boat, with its cargo of brown bunnies, in position, by reaching out and clinging to an overhanging bush.

In all her three weeks of life the Fawn had never laid eyes on human kind, nor, indeed, on any creature larger than herself save her mother, the Doe. She therefore raised trusting eyes to the Boy, licking his palm as he rubbed her nose, and she made no protest when he lifted her bodily into the boat, shoving the hares aside till he had found a place for her at the Little Girl's feet.

Just at that moment they caught sight of the Squirrels. Mother Red Squirrel and Shadow Tail and his brothers clung to a branch almost above their heads, and their cries grew shrill as a creeping flame began ascending the very tree they were on.

"Oh, please see if you can't get them!" begged the Girl, calling and coaxing to make them come down. The Boy tried, too, but in vain. Poor Mother Red Squirrel didn't understand, and she feared the children quite as much as she feared the flames.

In vain, too, the Boy pursued the Grouse chicks, while the sparks began showering all around them.

"Pull out, quick!" he cried. The Girl's eyes filled as she thought of Shadow Tail, the squirrel baby she had once held in her hand.

Mother Grouse Hen had clucked her chicks beneath her wings and now crouched despairingly on the wet mud of the jutting bank. She would protect them with her own body till the last possible moment.

"I have it!" exclaimed the Boy, bending to one strong oar while his sister took the other. "Let's get across quick, and then I'll show you!"



LIII
A WAY FOR THE SQUIRREL FAMILY

For the space of four minutes the children bent to their oars, while the breath of the flames on the shore behind them scorched their cheeks and parched their nostrils, and the fire ate its way through the brush to the very water's edge.

The bunnies fairly stood on top of one another till they filled the rowboat with brown billows of soft fur. And Fleet Foot, the little spotted Fawn, crouched with soft eyes fastened appealingly on the children's faces. In all the wilderness there is no creature so innocent and so helpless and so altogether lovely as a spotted fawn. So at least the children thought.

"Poor, poor bunnies!" sighed the Girl, as one was all but crowded over the edge of the boat.

"Aw, they'll be all right once they're on the other side," said the Boy. "Get in there, you!" and he shoved the hare back from the edge with his foot. His voice was just gruff enough to hide the pity in it.

But once drawn up on the opposite bank, he paused not even to help lift the bunnies out, but grabbed the belt axe that a backwoods boy always carries, and went hacking away at a slender sapling just opposite the tree the squirrels were on.

He made quick work of it, I can tell you, for there

wasn't a moment to lose. Notching it first on the side toward the river, he took care that it fell so that its slender top reached into the far-hanging branch on which the little family had taken its last stand.

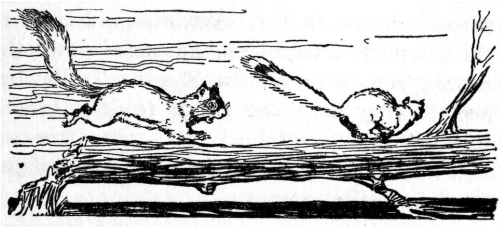
As the sapling landed, Mother Red Squirrel's black eyes snapped with a sudden hope. I can assure you she needed no second invitation to use the bridge thus mir-a-cu-lous-ly thrown across to her. With a glad bark to the youngsters to follow, she raced down the sapling across the stream, Shadow Tail at her heels. They didn't even stop to draw breath till they had scrambled up a pine tree set well back from the sight and the smell of the fire across the stream.

The Boy's eyes shone. "It didn't take them long to make up their minds," he chuckled.

"Now, get out of here," and he lifted the last of the bunnies out of the boat, to go bounding off into the depths of the green woods beyond,—far too fast for either Bob or Twinkly, I can assure you.

For the truce of their common peril was over, and the hares well knew if they didn't get into hiding before Bobby Lynx got sight of them, he'd celebrate his escape on one of his fellow-refugees.

Back on the wet mud of the bank they had left, Mother Grouse Hen seemed in a fair way to pull through after all, for the fire had stopped at the River's brink, and there was now but one great vista of charred and smoking tree trunks for as far as the eye could reach.



LIV
WHAT HAPPENED TO FLEET FOOT

“What worries me,” said the Boy, with an amused glance after the fleeing hares, “is what we are going to do with the Fawn. She’s far too young to look out for herself,” nodding toward the green depths into which bear and lynx had disappeared.—Twinkly wondered too.

“She is certainly too young to get along without her mother,” agreed the Girl, as the children from the Valley Farm studied the last of the refugees, who gazed into her face with her great trusting eyes.

“The trouble is,” said the Boy, “she probably has a mother somewhere, and then she’s a wild thing. She’d never be really happy with the cows. I suppose the doe just managed to save the other fawn. Aren’t there always two?”

“You think her mother got away then?” asked the Girl.

“Well I don’t know,” returned the Boy, gazing searchingly across the River through the charred tree trunks. Here the ground still smoked yellowly as the fire ate into the damp leaves of the nether layer of the forest floor. Red embers glowed where the flames had raged through the underbrush.

Now, as it happened, the Doe was searching

despairingly that very moment for her Fawn. She had made her escape in good season with the larger fawn, but Fleet Foot she had missed from her side when it was too late to return, and a wall of flame had risen between her and her little one.

The lost Fawn had raced, with the other Wood Folk, on before the flames to the River's brink, where the children had found her.

Meantime her mother had circled clear around the fire with her remaining little one, trotting up-stream until she came to a narrow part where her fawn could cross, peering and searching everywhere for Fleet Foot.

Now suddenly the children heard a dainty stamp and a shrill whistled "H-e-e-e-yew, he-u!" And over a copse of hazel bushes peered a red-brown doe, who instantly turned and leaped out of sight, tail raised like a little white flag behind to show the fawn which way to follow.

And "He-w!" said Fleet Foot, with a tiny stamp, and followed.

And Twinkly Eyes, the bear cub, took it all in, from the hiding of his tree-top.



LV
TWINKLY EYES GOES HOUSE-HUNTING

Betty Bluebird, like most of the other feathered folk, was beginning to think of starting south. For the wild ducks honking overhead told her it was going to be a cold winter and advised her to start without delay.

Twinkly Eyes also heard the warning. And it set him restlessly searching about for a snug den in which to pass the winter. For Twinkly Eyes was going to hi-ber-nate. With the first snow-fall he would cuddle up in the depth of some cave and pull the dead leaves after him, and tuck himself in bed for a sleep that would last until spring.

Every day now he rose with the dawn to begin his search. And every night he kept up till black darkness made it im-pos-sible to see.

But with all his searching, Twinkly Eyes never once ceased to eat everything good he came to.

No, indeed, Twinkly Eyes was not the bear to stop eating just because he was busy house-hunting.

Not a bit of it! In fact, if anything he ate more. Though he cut himself down to one meal, that one meal lasted from the moment he awoke in the morning to the moment he dropped to sleep in the chill of the autumn night.

One effect of so much eating was, of course, to make him as fat as a ball of butter. Another was to make his fur as thick and warm and glossy as the finest sleeping bag that ever was invented.

But search as he would, Twinkly Eyes could not find just the right place in which to den up for the winter. Of course, the first place he had visited was the den where he had been born. But his mother was there with this year's cubs, and she had made it quite plain that there would not be room for him too.

Then he thought of the pine woods on the slope of Mount Olaf, on the side toward the Valley Farm. And one chill October morning, when a fine drizzle reminded him that up north here winter was not far away, he decided to explore these woods.

The dried pine needles lay like a velvet carpet over the forest floor, and everywhere was the fragrance of wet pine. Through the thick gloom he could make out countless mushrooms growing at his feet, and each one he had sniffed, eating such as he knew would not poison him.

For his mother had taught him as a cub to know mushrooms.

The ground here slanted up a rocky knoll, and here and there were boulders, and here and there a fallen tree trunk.

But nowhere could Twinkly find a cave. And besides, he smelled lynx tracks everywhere, and it would never do to go to sleep for the winter in a place where Old Man Lynx could find him.

No, decidedly, the pine woods would not do.— Where, then, should he search?

Cutting down through a mixed wood that led to a tiny lake, Twinkly soon found himself neck-high in blueberry shrub. Only now the berries were all gone.

He had been here many times before, only never with a den in mind. So now he went over the ground again and through the brush around the lake, and back up the slippery hillside.

Suddenly a strange, sweet odor smote his nostrils. He was approaching an old deserted shack, with roof tumbling in and door hanging on one hinge. It had once been a sugar camp, had Twinkly Eyes but known. And the knowledge would have hastened his clumsy foot-steps. For that new smell was the fragrance of maple sugar, the one thing in the world that bears consider even better than honey.

There was no thought of danger as Twinkly Eyes approached the shack. Though had he not been too sleepy to reason it out, he might have known that anything so delicious as maple sugar would never be left like that. Not if the bees could get at it! And then how was it that his mother had never taken a chance on anything so tempting?

LVI
AT THE SUGAR CAMP

Twinkly sniffed and sniffed.

From the tumble-down shack on the mountain-side came the most wonderful odor! It fairly made his mouth water.

But still his natural cunning bade him sniff all about the place before he ventured within. Though there were hobnailed footprints everywhere, the man-scent had long since disappeared.

That twisting thunder-storm last July was doubtless to blame for the charred and crumbling appearance of the side the door was on. There was nothing to keep him from walking straight inside.

There were a number of iron kettles in the shack, and into each of these Twinkly sniffed with interest. But they were clean and empty. Where, then, did that sugary odor come from? Ah, over in one corner, where it had fallen, lay a wooden cask. This, Twinkly's wriggling nose told him, was the place. Inside this cask was the delicious something that made his mouth water so. Successive wettings, as rain and wind had pummeled through the side of the shack, had wet the contents till they were oozing liquidly through the cracks.

Twinkly Eyes put out his tongue and licked the

sides, then set joyously to work with his curved claws to tear an opening into the thing.

So suddenly that it struck him square in the face, the half of one stave came off. Then he broke off another, and after that a third. The keg had not been full, and the part he had torn an opening into was the empty part. But Twinkly didn't care. He simply thrust his head in and licked, and licked, and licked at the sugary cake.

He could just reach it with the red tip of that greedy tongue. There was nothing he could reach with his jaws. And presently he began to twist and wiggle in the effort to get more.

By dint of much shoving he finally got his head clear inside the cask. Then he was happy. My, how that bear enjoyed the next half-hour! By stretching his neck farther and farther through the narrow opening he could just scrape the delicious contents with his teeth.

His jaws dripped with the combined delights of an-tic-i-pa-tion and real-i-za-tion. That the feast would continue till the last crumb was gone he had no doubt whatever. Not Twinkly Eyes!

By and by, however, stretch as he might, he could thrust his head no farther, and he could reach no more. Then what a time there was, as the little Bear tried to pull himself out of the barrel.

And as he jerked and banged about in growing alarm, his heels sent everything in the cabin spinning about his shanks.

When finally his head came free quite suddenly, he sat down with such violence that he went sliding across the floor with the huge iron kettle over-turned on top of him. And, of course, being unable to see what it was that had imprisoned him, he struck out

still more viciously.

LVII
A FEAST AND A FAST

Twinkly Eyes was a most un-com-fort-able bear.

True, he had freed his head from the sugar cask. But in his blind fury at the thing that held his head imprisoned he had thrashed about till all the furniture in the camp had been sent spinning about his heels. Then at last the huge iron kettle had landed squarely on top of him!

He finally backed out of the thing and hastened from the cabin, sitting up on his haunches to nurse his bruised head. All the same, this maple sugar was mighty good stuff! Was he going to leave it? Not Twinkly Eyes! Not the little Black Bear who had once robbed the bee tree in spite of the worst its owners could do with their stings! He would go straight back there, give that kettle a good, vigorous cuff for its impudence, and then knock the sugar cask to bits.

So they thought they could frighten him away, did they? Cautiously he tiptoed back into the shack. This time he felt sure he had caught the keg at a dis-ad-van-tage, for with one powerful blow of his great, furry fist, he sent it whirling into the corner. Then grappling it with his long steel claws, he wrenched at the syrup-soaked wood.

For once it did not grab at his head. For he had torn such a hole in the side that there was room and

to spare. Next moment the fat cub had settled himself at that giant lump of maple sugar with the cask held tight between his black knees.

If Twinkly Eyes had been a small boy, he wouldn't have wanted anything more to eat for a week. And it is more than likely that he would hate the smell of maple sugar for the rest of his life.

But bears are not built that way. And Twinkly Eyes, with that same greed with which he had gobbled the honey comb, now put that maple sugar inside till there wasn't so much as a crumb of it left.

After that he slept awhile with his little black tummy rounded out till he could hardly move. For that is what makes a bear feel happiest, when he is eating his last meal for five months.

Next day he once more started on his lumbering tramp over the slopes of Mount Olaf to find his winter's resting place.

Winter would set in early this year, the wild ducks had shouted as they honked their way southward that fall.

And already the last leaves were falling in yellow swirls that crackled under-foot. In the pine forest it was still. But everywhere else the winds swept around the mountain in a way to chill through even Twinkly Eyes' thick coat.

Then one morning he awoke to find a world of white! And still he had found no cave to shelter him.



LVIII
THE FIRST SNOW

Yes, sir, Twinkly Eyes awoke to find it snowing!

A more surprised young bear you never saw in all your life, for as yet he had found no cave in which to pass his winter's sleep. And the winds that tore around Mount Olaf made goose-flesh underneath his furs.

He stared about him dazedly. Great soft flakes as big as feathers were falling, falling, falling through the naked tree-tops. He had never heard the world so still. And off across the valley the air looked thick and gray like a blanket.

And indeed, it was a blanket—was this whirling white stuff that kept covering over the dead leaves that carpeted the forest floor. It filled in all the niches, and shut out all the wind.

It was a blanket for next year's flowers, and for little young trees and shrubs too tender yet to meet the winter's cold.

It was a blanket for the field mice and the white-footed wood mice, in their homes under-ground or inside old hollow stumps. It would be a sheltering blanket for Fatty Chuck in his cave under the barn-yard fence, down at the Valley Farm. For it would sift down into his entrance hole and over the earth

above until frost could not reach him curled up in a ball there sound asleep.

But all this did not help Twinkly Eyes, staring at the falling flakes while he longed with his whole soul for sleep. If in all his rambles over the mountainside he had not found even a crevice in the rocks in which he might den up for the winter, was it likely that further search would reveal one? He yawned, for he was oh, so dreadfully sleepy! He longed to curl up right where he was—but he knew if he did, he'd never wake. He'd just freeze solid, and that would be the end of him!

His last meal of dried bark and pine needles,—the meal that was to keep his stomach from feeling empty until spring, just because it wouldn't digest,—sat heavy within him now, and he longed to begin his hi-ber-na-tion.

Animals that hibernate, you know, sleep away the cold months when food is hard to find. And when they wake up in the spring, they look very different from the fat creatures they were in the fall. They are then as thin as they were plump before.

But of course, with the season of plenty, they soon make up all they have lost. Meantime, they have kept safe and warm all through the bitter winter. For they first close up the entrance to their dens with leaves and mosses, and then curl up into warm furry balls, with their toes and their noses inside. Then the snow falls so deep that it keeps the high winds from finding their way to the sleepers, and there is nothing to disturb their dreams.

Fatty Chuck hibernates, too. But Fatty had gone into winter quarters long before, and was now snoozing away as snug and comfy as anything you can imagine.

If only the winter had been as easy a problem for Twinkly Eyes! What was he to do?

LIX
TWINKLY EYES GOES TO BED

What should he do, asked Twinkly Eyes as he stared about at the falling snow-flakes?

He had been driven from the den in which he had slept away his first winter in the Great North Woods, because his mother's littlest cubs now took up all the room.

His father had a cave, too, somewhere, he supposed. But Twinkly Eyes would not have dared to enter that, much less to lie himself down to sleep beside that great, growling monster. Like most cubs, Twinkly was wholesomely afraid of his father.

As he stood swaying sleepily, winking the snow-flakes from his heavy eyelids, Twinkly Eyes had a sudden bright idea. He would simply curl up under a stump!

There was an old overturned pine stump not far away, and to its roots had clung such a mass of earth that he could easily cuddle beneath it. In fact, the dried leaves with which he would have made his bed, had he found a cave to stow them in, were already drifted high there. And all he had to do was to crawl in and wait for the snow to cover his shelter completely over.

That was it! The snow would drift over leaves and

stump and all, shutting out the winds and the frost, and hiding him while he slept.

An hour later, any one passing that way would have seen a huge round ball of black fur just showing beneath a blanket of leaves under the stump. And by nightfall they would have found nothing but a deep white bank with a root sticking out at the top.

Just enough air would filter through the snow to keep his lungs supplied, and that was all he needed now for a long time to come.

Twinkly Eyes, cuddled up snug in his strange feather bed, gave one last blissful sigh, and was off into a dreamland where honey filled every hollow tree trunk and blueberries grew everywhere as thick as grass.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES

Page	Changed from	Changed to
182	have dared to enter that, much less to lie him	have dared to enter that, much less to lie himself

Typos fixed; non-standard spelling and dialect retained.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ADVENTURES OF TWINKLY EYES THE LITTLE BLACK BEAR ***

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