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Title: Father Thrift and His Animal Friends

Author: Joseph C. Sindelar

Illustrator: Helen Geraldine Hodge

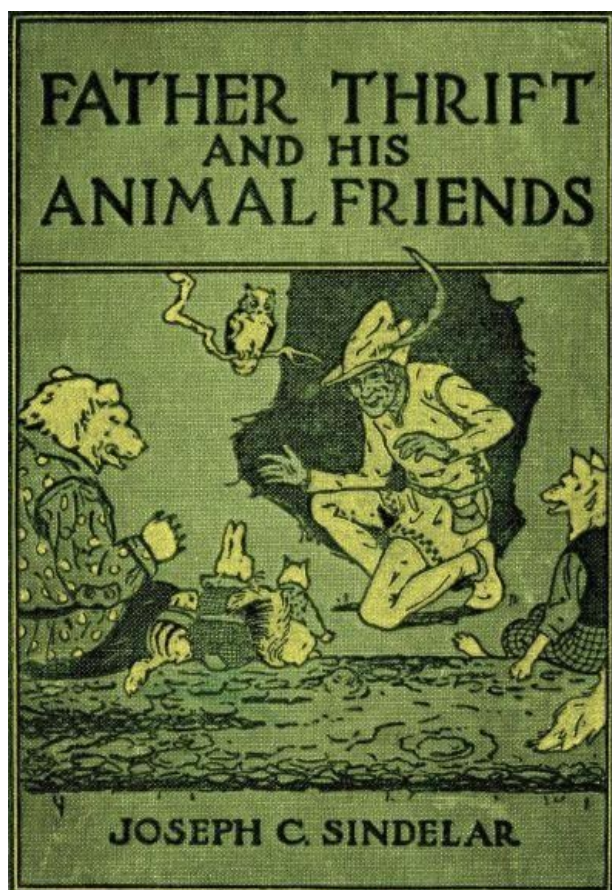
Release date: July 23, 2013 [EBook #43287]

Language: English

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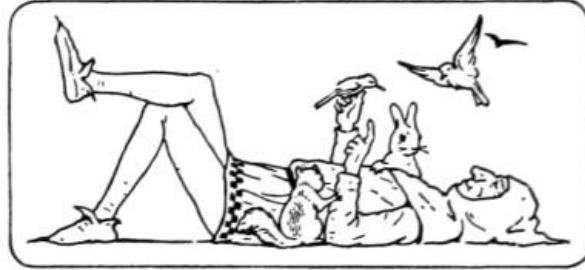
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FATHER THRIFT AND HIS ANIMAL FRIENDS  
JOSEPH C. SINDELAR

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**Father Thrift and His Animal Friends**



# Father Thrift and His Animal Friends

By  
**Joseph C. Sindelar**  
Author of  
**The Nixie Bunny Books**



With Pictures by  
**Helen Geraldine Hodge**

**Beckley-Cardy Company**  
Chicago

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### **BOOKS BY JOSEPH C. SINDELAR**

BOW-WOW AND MEW-MEW (Craik-Sindelar).  
Illustrated in colors.

NIXIE BUNNY IN MANNERS-LAND.  
Illustrated in colors.

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Illustrated in colors.

NIXIE BUNNY IN HOLIDAY-LAND.  
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FATHER THRIFT AND HIS ANIMAL FRIENDS.  
Illustrated in black and color.

MORNING EXERCISES FOR ALL THE YEAR.

BEST MEMORY GEMS.

BRIGHT ENTERTAINMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS.

THE BEST THANKSGIVING BOOK.

THE BEST CHRISTMAS BOOK.

MERRY CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENTS.

CLOSING DAY ENTERTAINMENTS.

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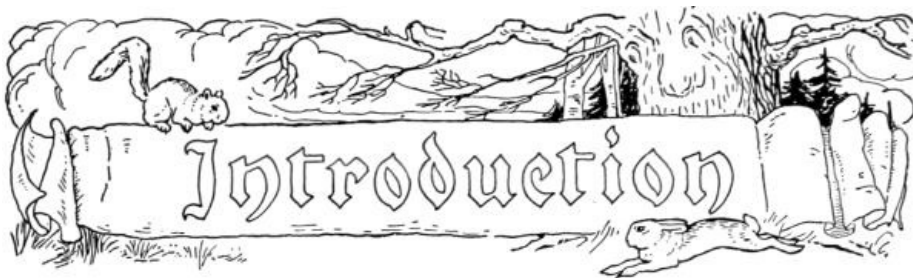
**To  
Joseph C. Jr.  
and  
his friends**





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## Introduction

As from the days your father's father knew,  
This little story book now comes to you.  
So when you turn its pages, heed them well:  
Though strange the stories, many truths they tell.

They tell of animals and birds and trees,  
Of children, flowers, and honeybees;  
Of a queer old man, and a quaint old town  
With crooked streets that ran up and down.

They tell of these and many, many more.  
Still, this I'd add to what has gone before:  
In the wood there grows a tree—the thrifty tree—  
As wonderful as anything can be!

Its trunk is copper; silver are its leaves;  
Its blossoms from bright golden threads it weaves;  
Its fruit is health and wealth and honest joy—  
So seek this goodly tree, wise girl and boy.

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## THE QUEER LITTLE OLD MAN

Once upon a time, in a quaint old town, there lived a queer little old man. His name was Thrift—Father Thrift people called him, although he really was no father at all.

As I said before, he was just a queer little old man. He had no wife, no children, no home of his own.

But he had a kind heart within his queer little body. Also, he had willing hands and feet, and these brought him many friends.

How old the queer little man was, or how long he had lived in the quaint old town, no one seemed to know.

The present grandfathers and grandmothers remembered how the queer little man used to take them, as children, on his lap and tell them stories.

He had told the same stories to their children and to their children's children. Yet to none of them did he look any different to-day than he did when they first saw him.

You must not think that telling stories was all the queer little old man had to do. He was a sort of all-round village helper. He helped everybody who needed help.

But it was for his good advice that the queer little old man was most sought. He always thought well for everybody, and the people profited by following his teaching.

In fact, the whole town grew prosperous, *extremely* prosperous, by heeding Father Thrift's advice.

You would suppose that the queer little old man would be well rewarded.

Not so! For when these people became very, *very* prosperous, they felt that the queer little old man was only in their way.

What further need had they of his advice?

He had taught them to live simply, to spend wisely, and to waste nothing. He had taught them to enjoy simple pleasures and to form simple habits.

"Of what good is time or money, body or brain, if we do not know how to use any of them?" he would say.

"What will become of good health if we do not take care of it?"

"Of what good is study-time or play-time unless we get the most we can out of it?"

"Or of what worth is life itself if we waste it?"

But the townspeople would not listen to him now. Young Mr. Spendthrift had come to town and they followed him. They only laughed at Father Thrift.

"Poor, queer old man!" they said. "He must be out of his head."

And they began to spend money foolishly, and to waste their time and their health as well as their money.

*How* it grieved the queer little old man to see things go so!

Day after day he would sit with his head in his hands, thinking, thinking, *thinking*. (He liked to think even better than most people like to eat.)

Then one day, after he had sat for a long, long time thinking, he got up and exclaimed: "At last, at last I have it! I'm sure I have it, this time. Yes, I'm sure."

And those who heard the queer little old man said: "Just as we told you. Poor fellow, he's out of his head! Some of the wheels up here have gotten badly out of order." And they pointed to their foreheads.



But the old man heard them not. Or if he heard he lost no sleep on account of what they said.





## THE LITTLE OLD MAN DECIDES

The next day the whole town was busy—very busy—gossiping. Everybody told everybody else what the queer little old man had been overheard to say.

But where was the little old man?

Now that they thought of it, who had seen him since the night before?

Nobody!

Where could he be? Had he dropped through a crack in the floor, his disappearance could not have been more sudden or more complete.

Every one was excited. It was not that the town cared particularly about the queer little old man. It was not that, at all. Only the people were curious to learn where he could have gone or what could have happened to him.

Leading from the town was a crooked road that was traveled but little. At the end of the road was a great forest where there lived many animals and birds.

Had any of the townspeople been up very, very early on the morning that the queer little old man disappeared, they need not have been so excited.

For on that morning a bent little figure might have been seen trudging along the crooked road leading toward the forest.

The man was dressed poorly, almost shabbily. He walked slowly, and seemed to be deep in thought.

Over his shoulder he carried a cane. From it hung a bag made of a big red figured handkerchief.

Apparently the man was on a journey, and the big red figured handkerchief was his traveling bag.



The fat, round-faced Moon Man smiled down from his home in the sky at the little figure in the road. His mouth seemed to move, and I am sure he was saying:

“Go, brave little old man. Go where you’ve decided to go.

“If you are going to the forest, you will no doubt find a welcome there. Some animals and birds are better as friends than are some people.

“Anyway, the great forest is in need of your lessons. I will light the way for you. May the good spirits attend you!”

And in the stillness of the early morning the queer little old man of the quaint old town might have been heard to answer:

“So I have decided. Come what may, I shall be satisfied.

“Thank you, kind Moon Man, for your good wishes and for your bright light.”



And on and on he trudged.

The orange sun was peeping its head above the horizon when the queer little old man reached the edge of the forest.

What warmth the glorious sun gave! His rays gave warmth of heart as well as warmth of body.

The old man sat down on a log, to rest his tired legs and to take a bite to eat.

Then a voice within the queer little old man began to talk.

It said: "Perhaps, after all, you should not have left the quaint old town. You were a coward to run away.

"Ever since young Mr. Spendthrift came there to live you have been discontented. And when the people began to take his advice rather than yours, you grew angry and left.

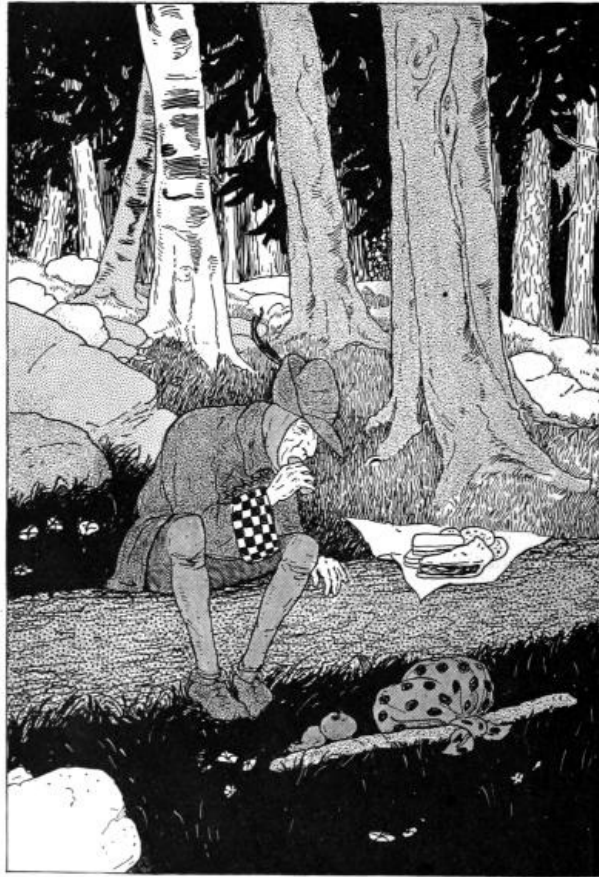
"Is that the way for an old man to do who always had plenty to eat and to wear?"

But another voice with a fiery little temper was waiting to be heard.

"What!" it cried, "have you no principle? Are you a worm, to be stepped upon?"

"Waste is wrong, no matter what you waste. Thrift is right and forever will be.

"Therefore, hie you to the heart of the forest as you have decided. You will at least have peace of mind, and surely that is worth as much as 'plenty to eat and to wear!'"



## HIS FIRST DAY IN THE FOREST

At last Father Thrift was in the heart of the forest.  
It was very peaceful there.  
The wind rustled the leaves on the trees.  
The birds flew among the branches and sang and talked and scolded.  
Do birds ever scold?  
Oh, my, yes! You should hear the mother birds, sometimes, when the father birds waste their time about the house and the baby birds are hungry!  
But this morning nearly everything in the forest seemed happy.  
The squirrels leaped from tree to tree.  
Robin sang his merry "Cheer-up! chee, chee! Cheer-up! chee, chee!" And he sang it again and again.  
I think he tried to say: "Welcome, queer little old man! Welcome to the forest!" (Besides, he *may* have found some good fat worms to eat.)  
The dry leaves and small twigs cracked under the little old man's feet as he walked along.  
He could hear the soft, rippling sound of the water as it ran over the stones in the brook.  
He knew that in the shade of the bending willow trees little fishes played in the water.  
Blue sky was above him. Green grass was all around him. Flowers grew at his feet.  
Was not the forest a glorious place in which to be!  
The queer little old man drew in a deep, deep breath.



The air was filled with the perfume of the pine trees.  
"Tap, tap, tap!" Who is disturbing the peace of the forest? It sounds like a carpenter with his hammer.  
"Tap, tap, tap!" There it goes again.  
The queer little old man looked around.  
"Oh, there you are, you little redhead!" he said.  
It was Woodpecker. Funny bird! How swiftly he climbs the trunk of the tree!  
"Tap, tap, tap!" he knocks with his bill. "Come out from under the bark, you bugs!" he cries. "I want some dinner."  
But the bugs do not always come. So Woodpecker bores a hole in the decayed part of the tree and with his bill goes after them.  
Does he get them? Yes, indeed; so quickly does he work that the poor little bugs wouldn't have time to whistle for help even if they knew how.  
"Curious fellow, that!" said the queer little old man. "He is industrious, too.  
"He reminds me of the hop-toad that came to one of the gardens last summer.  
"The toad, too, used to catch and eat the bugs. By doing so he saved many a plant from being destroyed.  
"But what a homely old fellow he was! And how handsome the woodpecker is!  
"It is quite true that one does not grow to look like what he eats, but rather like what he thinks.  
"The hop-toad lives so close to the ground that he sees only the brown earth. And if he thinks at all he

thinks of *that*.

"But the woodpecker flies in the air and lives in the trees.

"He sees the blue sky and the pretty flowers and the silvery brook. There is beauty all around him. And if you wish to know of what *he* thinks, just see how he *looks*."

Thus the queer old man spent his first day in the forest. Every little thing interested him. He watched the busy bees at work. He traced the footprints of bears and rabbits and deer in the soft ground along the brook.

But at last night came and spread its cover of darkness over all.

In a cave the queer little man made a soft bed of dry leaves. Then he lay down to sleep.

"Friends, good-night," he whispered to the forest.

And the trees rustled back, "Good-night, good-night."



## GREAT GRAY OWL

Great Gray Owl sat up in the tree, winking and blinking.

He would turn his head first in one direction, then in another.

Wise old bird! What he could not see with those large glassy eyes of his was hardly worth seeing.

Suddenly he flew to the ground. There, like a brave sentinel, he marched back and forth in front of the cave in which Father Thrift was sleeping.

Several times in the night the queer little old man heard the hooting of the owl. More than once he thought he heard the wise bird say, "Who-oo, who-oo goes there?"

The first time a sharp "Hiss-ss, hiss-ss!" came in reply. Father Thrift shivered to think of a snake crawling so near him.

Then he heard the owl's sharp command: "Halt! What is your business here?"

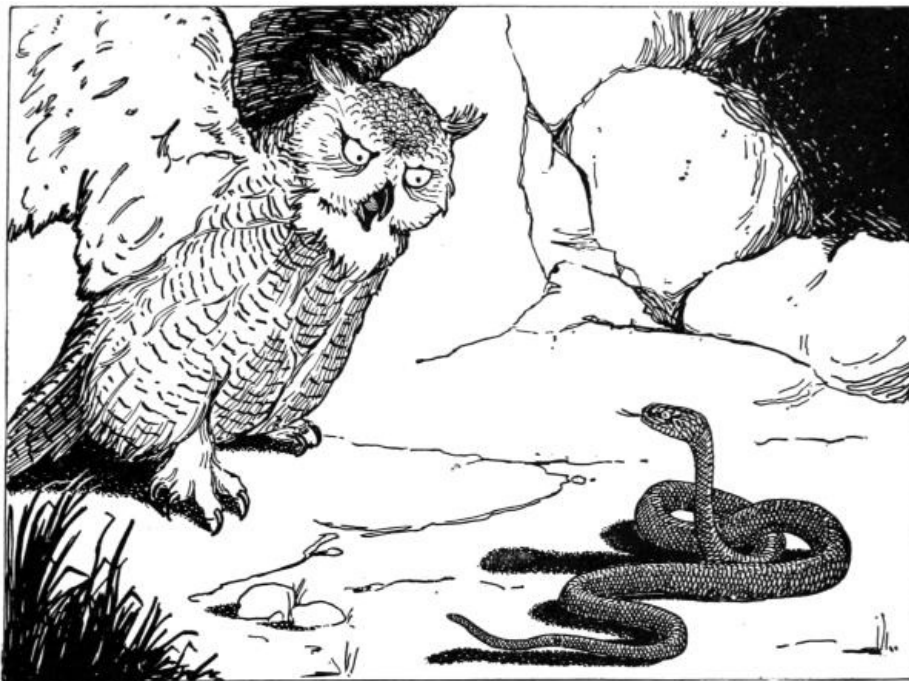
"I'm visiting friends that live in a hole in that cave," replied the snake.

"I advise you to do your visiting some other time," said the owl. "Father Thrift is sleeping in the cave to-night. He must not be disturbed."

With the snake the owl's word was law. He had known of several snakes that had shortened their lives by not taking the wise bird's advice.

"Such strong claws, such a hooked bill, such sharp eyes, are not to be trifled with," thought the snake, as he wriggled along toward home. "But what is the forest coming to when one can't visit his friends? Besides, who is Father Thrift, anyway?"

Just then Great Gray Owl called to the snake: "Come to the cave, here, at ten o'clock in the morning and don't forget. Tell your friends to come, too. There will be a meeting of all the animals of the forest."



As he finished saying this the owl heard a loud crackling of twigs and a rustling of leaves behind him. He turned around just in time to face Shaggy Bear.

"What, ho, Friend Owl!" cried the bear. "What are you about this evening? Are you looking for wee mice or for tender little bunnies?"

"No," said Great Gray Owl, "not to-night. I am keeping watch so that Father Thrift may not be disturbed in his sleep."

"And who, pray, may Father Thrift be?" asked Shaggy Bear.

"To-morrow, at ten o'clock in the morning, if you will come back here, you may learn who Father Thrift is. For the present I will say that the cave in which you have been in the habit of sleeping will be Father Thrift's home in the future."

"So, so!" growled Shaggy Bear. "So, so!" (He spoke this last rather crossly.)

"Yes," said Great Gray Owl, "that, at least, has been decided."

Then he went on: "Aren't you glad it was *your* cave that was chosen for Father Thrift? Aren't you *glad*? Think of the honor it will be to you to have him use it! Just *think* of it!"

What a fine fellow the owl was, to be sure, to give other people's things away so generously!

As for the bear, whether he thought of the honor or not, I cannot say. He never was known to be much of a thinker.

Nevertheless the owl's tactful words soothed him, and he felt quite satisfied to leave things as they were.

"I know of other caves and of hollows in trees where I can sleep," said Shaggy Bear. "When I'm full of honey I don't care!"

That the bear was full of honey seemed quite clear.

Indeed, if you might judge by outside appearances, he was over full. The sticky stuff was running down his chin, and he kept wiping it off with his big paw as he walked away in lazy bear fashion.

Before morning all the animals of the wood, and the birds and the bees, knew that at ten o'clock there would be a meeting at the cave.

What it was about or who Father Thrift was, not one of them knew. That is, no one knew except the owl; and he wouldn't say.

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## THE ANIMALS OF THE FOREST

The next morning the sun was up before Father Thrift. In fact, when he awoke the sun had already taken the sparkling dewdrops away on a journey back to the clouds.

The sky was bright. The birds were singing, the insects humming. And the flowers were smiling and thanking the sun for the warmth and the light.

Father Thrift rubbed his eyes and looked about him. Something was wrong, very wrong!

The rooster wasn't crowing. The dog wasn't barking. The horses weren't neighing. Those were familiar sounds to Father Thrift's ears. And he missed them.

He drew a deep breath. The air was sweet with the odor of fir trees and of pine.

"Ah," he said, "how could I have forgotten that only yesterday I left the quaint old town!

"This, then, is my new home in the forest. It is a glorious home!"

Soon the queer little old man had his breakfast. He had freshly picked berries and bread, and clear, cool water from a spring near by.

Then he sat down on a log, to think.

Suddenly he heard a great rustling of leaves and a flapping and fluttering of wings.

Turning around, he found himself face to face with such a gathering of animals and birds as he had never in his life seen.

And at his elbow stood—who do you suppose? Great Gray Owl, whom he had heard hoot in the night.

Before Father Thrift had time to ask what the gathering was about, Great Gray Owl rolled his big eyes and said: "Father Thrift, permit me to introduce to you the animals of the forest."

"I am happy to meet you all," said Father Thrift kindly.

Then the animals gave a shout that sounded like three cheers and a hundred tigers.

Do you wonder at that? You will not when I tell you all that were present.

There were the shaggy bears, the red foxes, the busy beavers, the gray wolves, the cottontail rabbits, the bushytail squirrels, the woodchucks, the chipmunks, and the deer.

Then there were the eagles, the owls, the hawks, the crows, the blue jays, and the robins, and many others of the bird family. Even the honeybees and the butterflies, the insects and the snakes were there.



Indeed, all the animals of the forest must have been present, there were so many.

It was wonderful how quickly they had learned of Father Thrift's coming to their home.

Now the Great Gray Owl was waving a stick in the air, motioning for silence.

When everything was quiet, he perched himself on a tall stump, where every one could see him, and made a speech.

"Father Thrift," he said, "we welcome you to the forest. We are glad that you have come to live with us.

"Many years ago we birds and animals had a king. But he died and since then things have not gone well with us.

"We have not lived wisely. I fear many of us have wasted when we had plenty, and suffered when what we had was gone.

"If you will be our king, we will promise to do exactly as you say."

He rolled his big eyes at the animals and asked, "Won't we?" And every one of the animals shouted, "We will!"

But Father Thrift declared that he would rather be only one of them, instead of being their ruler.

He would advise them, and teach them, and help them.

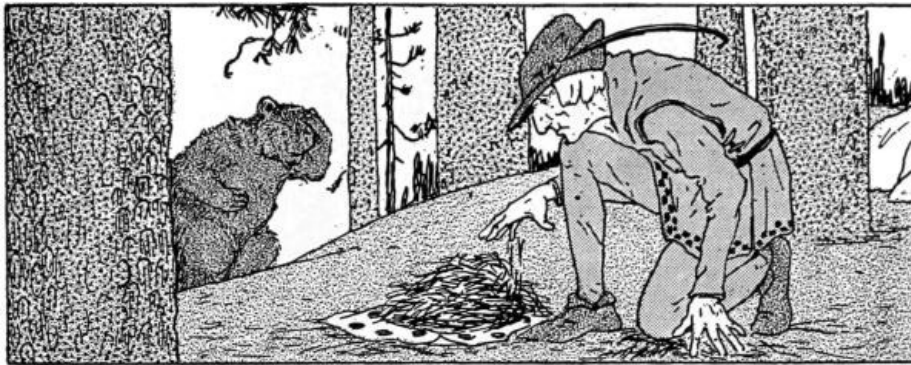
"And we will help you, too," said Shaggy Bear. "I'll give you my cave for keeps, to begin with."

"And I'll bring you nuts to eat," said Bushytail Squirrel.

"And I'll bring you some of my honey," said Honeybee. "That is, I will if Shaggy Bear doesn't steal it all."

"And I'll bring you plenty of mice," said Great Gray Owl.

But Father Thrift only smiled at that. For, of course, mice would be of no use to him!



## WHAT MADE THE BEAR SICK

Father Thrift was busy carrying pine needles into his cave. Pine needles make a soft carpet. And the bare floor of the cave was *so* hard.

At last he had enough and he sat down to rest.

Just then he looked out of his cave and saw Shaggy Bear, half walking, half crawling toward him.

"Why, whatever is the matter?" Father Thrift exclaimed in astonishment.

"I am so sick I believe I shall die," groaned the bear. The poor fellow's face was pale and tears were running down his cheeks.

"Oh, cheer up, cheer up!" cried Father Thrift briskly. "Why should you *want* to die?"

"That's it—I don't!" returned the bear sorrowfully. "But I believe my time has come."

"Where do you feel the worst—in your stomach?" asked Father Thrift.

"Yes," replied Shaggy Bear. "That is where the trouble started."

"I thought so; I thought so," said Father Thrift. "I wonder that you were not sick before.

"Now, first of all, let me tell you that you are not going to die, not yet. But should you keep on eating as you have eaten in the past few weeks, you could never expect to be strong and healthy."

"Why?" asked the bear, brightening up suddenly.

But Father Thrift did not answer his question.



"I am going to suggest something for you to do, Shaggy," he said.

The bear looked puzzled but hopeful.

"You won't like it," Father Thrift continued. "No one ever did. But it is the only way by which you can become well and strong again.

"The very first time I saw you I knew that you were not eating the right kind of meals.

"Why, bears are known to have such good appetites that we often hear boys say, 'I'm as hungry as a bear!'

"But you don't feel that way. That is because you eat too much honey and not enough solid, nourishing food.

"This makes you sick. And while perhaps you wouldn't die from it, you would grow to be cross and disagreeable. Then no one would like you. Would that be any better?"

The bear scratched his head. "But what am I to do?" he asked.

"Stop eating sweets for three months," advised Father Thrift. "Don't you see that you spoil your appetite for good roots and berries by eating too much honey?"

"What, do you suppose, would become of boys and girls who ate nothing but cookies and candy, instead of milk and eggs, and meat and bread, and vegetables and fruit?"

"A little candy, when eaten after meals, seldom hurts anybody. When you are better you may have a little honey again, too.

"Another thing. Besides eating and sleeping, what do you do?"

"Nothing," replied Shaggy Bear.

"Hereafter you must spend some time each day working or walking or playing outdoors," said Father Thrift. "You need exercise.

"Don't be afraid to run. That will fill your lungs with pure, fresh air and make your blood circulate more freely.

"Eat only three meals a day and be regular. Do not eat between meals. Remember that the stomach works hard and needs rest as much as do your feet.

"Eat slowly and chew your food well, and I promise that at the end of three months you will feel better than you have ever felt in your life."

The bear made a wry face at all this. For he liked honey about as much as he disliked exercise.

"Mayn't I eat *some* honey?" he asked pleadingly.

Father Thrift looked at him a little sternly.

"None for three months," he said.

Shaggy Bear was in earnest and at once promised to do as he was told.

Then, as the bear rose to go, Father Thrift patted him on the back.

"You mustn't let this spoil your good times," he said. "Only remember that nobody can be happy without good health."

It was a hard trial for the bear.

Many, many times he was tempted to stuff himself with honey and then roll up in his cave and go to sleep. But each time he turned sadly away from temptation.

And at the end of three months he was as sound and healthy as a bear could be. Then how grateful he was to Father Thrift for his good advice!

And the queer little old man was happy to think that he had been able to help Shaggy so much.



## HOW THE WOODPECKERS HELPED

One morning, as Father Thrift was sitting in front of his cave sunning himself, he heard some one crying. It was a squeaky sort of cry.

Father Thrift could not imagine who it could be that was in trouble.

He looked around, but saw no one.

Then he listened. The sound came from behind a large tree near by. He walked over to the spot. And there sat—who do you suppose?

Little Gray Squirrel, crying into his maple-leaf handkerchief as though his very heart would break!

“What is the matter, Gray Squirrel?” asked Father Thrift.

“Oh, Father Thrift,” sobbed Little Gray Squirrel, “let me tell you what some bad boys did to me!

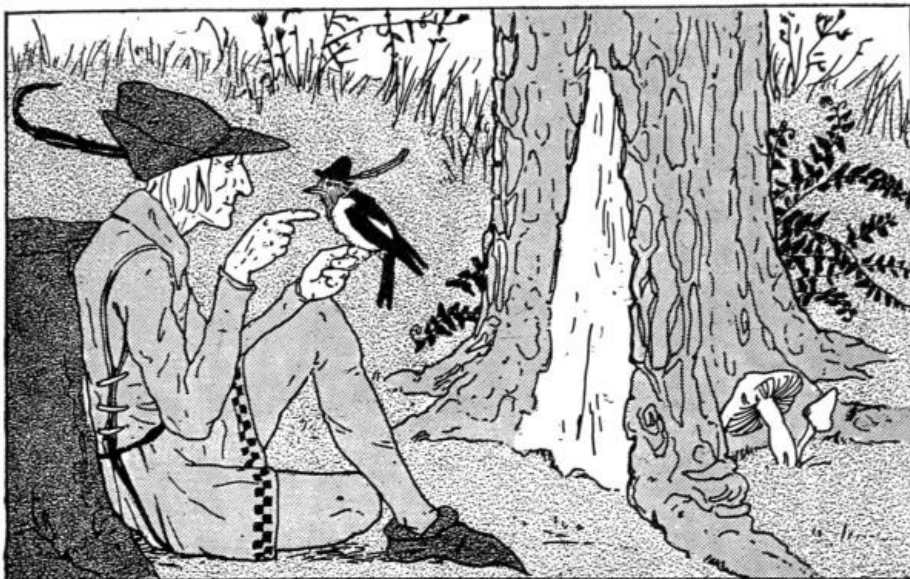
“I live in the big old oak tree near the edge of the forest. I have a nest in the old tree’s trunk. There I live with my baby squirrels. There, too, I have gathered and stored nuts for food.

“And now some boys have stolen all my nuts!

“Soon the cold days of winter will come. Then what shall I do for food for my babies and myself?”

And the poor little squirrel cried until he almost choked, and fresh tears ran down his cheeks.

Father Thrift looked angry. He said: “This is very bad. I am sorry to hear all this, good Gray Squirrel. While I cannot give you back the nuts which the boys stole, I think I can send some one to help you gather more.



“There are still some nuts on the ground, and we’ll help you to find them.”

Little Gray Squirrel thanked Father Thrift for his kind words. Then he dried his tears and started for home.

And the queer little old man sat watching the bushy tail as it whisked down the crooked path and out of sight.

Then all of a sudden he heard a sharp “Tap-tap-tap!”

Without even looking up Father Thrift knew who it was. “A friend in need,” he said to himself.

Then he called to the woodpecker that was doing the knocking. “I wish to talk with you,” he said.

Woodpecker flew down, and Father Thrift told him all about Little Gray Squirrel.

“Oh, we will help him gather a fresh store of nuts,” said Mr. Woodpecker. “Indeed, we will help!” And he flew away.

Within a very short time a whole flock of woodpeckers was flying toward Little Gray Squirrel’s home.

Soon Little Gray Squirrel’s troubles were over, for the woodpeckers filled his winter storeroom full of the choicest nuts. Now he was sure of having plenty to eat all winter for himself and his family. And how thankful he was!



But that is not all.

When the woodpeckers were through filling the squirrel's storeroom with nuts, did they stop?

No, indeed! One woodpecker who was older than the others got up on the topmost branch of the tree and said:

"Dear brothers, do you realize now how foolish we have been all our lives?

"In the summer we feed on bugs and beetles and ants and seeds.

"Then in the winter, because we know no better, some of us go South. Some of us go hungry, and some of us die, because we cannot find enough to eat.

"Why cannot we, too, store up nuts and have food for the winter as the squirrels do?"

"The very thing!" cried the other woodpeckers.

So they all began gathering acorns and beechnuts and storing them in the bark of the trees.

Some of the nuts they would drop beneath the bark of the tree. And some they would drive with their strong bills into cracks and holes which they found here and there.

The trees which were old and worm-eaten were, of course, the easiest into which to drive the nuts. Knot-holes, too, were good places in which to store food.

When the woodpeckers had many, many nuts stored away, one of them said:

"Isn't it strange that we didn't think of this before! We need not go South to find a new home this winter. We can stay right here and still have plenty to eat."

And that is what they did.

So, while the woodpeckers helped Little Gray Squirrel out of his trouble, they helped themselves into the good habit of learning to save. And they have not forgotten it to this day.



## THE BUSY BEAVERS

One evening Father Thrift was sitting by the brook, looking into the water. The bright silver moon made the night almost as light as day. Everything was quiet, except for a faint ripple of the water.

Suddenly Father Thrift heard something go, "Splash-sh! splash-sh! splash! splash!" almost beside him.

Then he heard a voice calling from the water.

"Father Thrift," it said, "you have never visited us. Won't you take your canoe and come now?"

And Father Thrift, looking into the water, saw that it was Mr. Beaver who was calling.

"Thank you, thank you, Mr. Beaver!" replied the queer little old man. "I will accept your invitation with pleasure."

And soon the two were making their way through the water to the place where the beavers were building their home.

And where do you suppose that was?

On a nice sunny hill? Or in the shade of the trees?

No, no! Instead, it was in the middle of a pond which the beavers themselves had made by building a dam of mud and sticks.

The beavers' house was made of mud and sticks mixed with stones. Or, rather, it was being made. The beavers were still working at it.

"My, my," said Father Thrift, "how very, very late you beavers work! Don't you ever rest?"

"I know you are very industrious. Nearly everybody knows that, as there is a familiar saying among us that an industrious person works like a beaver. But I never supposed that you worked all the time!"



"We don't," replied Mr. Beaver. "We work only at night. All of our work is done then. And I am ashamed to tell you that there are some beavers who do not wish to work at all."

"So!" exclaimed Father Thrift. "I am surprised at that. And do they live here, too?"

"Oh, no," said Mr. Beaver. "We have no place for lazy beavers, or 'old bachelors,' as we call them. Usually we cut their tails off and chase them away."

"That is punishment enough," said Father Thrift. "Still, lazy folks deserve no better. Wasting time is just as bad as wasting food, or money, or anything else."

Then Father Thrift stopped to watch the interesting and wonderful ways of the wise beavers.

Some of them dug mud out of the bottom of the creek.

Others cut sticks from bushes and trees with their big chisel-edged teeth. By biting out chips, one by one, a beaver can easily cut down a large tree.

The mud and sticks for their house and dam they carried against their breasts as they swam, holding them there with their forefeet. Then they would put the sticks in place and press the mud down.

Their tails they used only for swimming. But, then, those big, strong tails make fine propellers.

"You are building a very large house, it seems to me," remarked Father Thrift.

"Yes," replied Mr. Beaver. "But you must remember that several families of beavers live in the different rooms of this house."

"Just so, just so," said the queer little old man. "I suppose that you find your house comfortable. But isn't it rather damp?"

"In some parts, yes," admitted Mr. Beaver. "But in the center of our house we have rooms above the water.

"Of course, as you know, we cannot climb trees like a squirrel. Neither can we burrow like a cottontail rabbit. But in deep water we are safe.

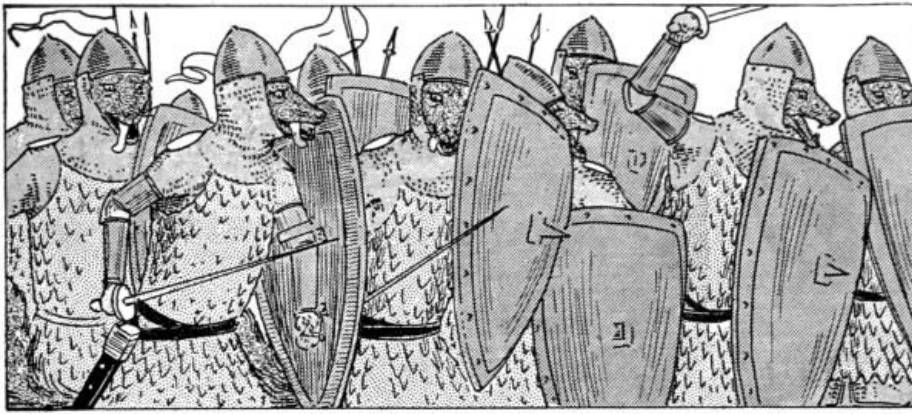
"We enter and leave our homes from beneath the water, unseen. And when we are attacked by enemies we take to the water to save ourselves."

"I have been told that your food is chiefly the roots of the common yellow water lily," said Father Thrift. "What do you do in the winter when the pond is frozen and there are no lily roots to be had?"

"Oh," said Mr. Beaver, "we eat the bark of trees, too—mostly poplar, birch, and willow. But, as the ice prevents us from getting to the land in winter, we should not have even that to eat if we did not cut a supply of sticks in the summer time.

"These we throw into the water opposite the doors of our houses and leave them there for the winter, for bark is good beaver food."

Father Thrift nodded. But on his way home he could have been heard to say: "Wise little animals! Always working. Always saving. Always having."



## THE GRAY FOXES AND THE RED FOXES

After Father Thrift came to the forest to live, one night each week (except in bad or very cold weather) had been "story night."

On "story night" all the animals would meet in front of his cave to hear and tell stories.

This night Gray Fox was to tell a story.

Gray Fox was a good story-teller, and so he always had a large audience. Most of the animals were present to hear him.

And this is the story Gray Fox told:

There was once a young fox who was very wasteful. He left half his food on his plate. He spent all his pennies for candy. He broke his playthings purposely, and tore his clothes needlessly. There was really no end to his wastefulness.

This fox belonged to the family of Gray Foxes. And the Gray Foxes were a prosperous nation.

They lived peaceably among themselves and with their neighbors, and every one had plenty to eat, to wear, and to spend.

So no one paid much attention to Young Fox's wastefulness. Or if the other foxes did pay attention to him, they rather imitated him, for he *was* a clever young fox.

Soon nearly all the young foxes grew wasteful. They all left half their food on their plates. They all spent their pennies for candy. They all broke their playthings purposely, and tore their clothes needlessly. There was no end to their wastefulness.

And so things went from bad to worse.

But one day a messenger brought the Gray Foxes some bad news. The Red Foxes were preparing to make war upon the Gray Foxes!



"Why make war upon us?" asked the Gray Foxes. "We are a peaceable nation. We harm no one."

"True, true!" said Governor Gray Fox. "But remember, also, that we are a prosperous nation. We are *too* prosperous to please the Red Foxes. We must prepare to defend ourselves."

And they did prepare. And then there was a long and bloody war between the Gray Foxes and the Red Foxes.

The Gray Fox fathers and brothers, who should have been working in the fields and mills and factories, were out killing the Red Fox fathers and brothers.

And the Red Fox fathers and brothers, instead of working in their fields and mills and factories, were out killing the Gray Fox fathers and brothers.

But the foxes did not stop eating. And they did not stop wearing clothes.

Just as many foxes as ever were eating food and wearing clothes. Yet only about half as many were left at home to make the things to eat and the clothes to wear. The rest of the foxes were away at war.

So, of course, there were only half as many things to eat and to wear as there had been before. And because there were only half as many, and every one wanted these, they cost twice as much.

Now it seemed as though the poor foxes wouldn't have money enough to buy food and clothes. And they worried as to how they could get along.

But the rich foxes, like Young Fox and his friends, could still buy all the things *they* wanted, because they had plenty of money. They bought more than they needed.

"This will never do!" declared Governor Gray Fox. "Everybody must eat, and everybody must wear clothes.

"Hereafter every one will get an equal share of the food, and nothing must be wasted. And clothes will cost just so much and no more."

The poor foxes said that that was fair enough, for they hadn't anything to waste. But the rich foxes complained bitterly. They said the Governor was trying to starve them.

Still, they had to do as the Governor said. And it was good for them to do with less. It is true that the fat foxes lost their big stomachs, but that made them look handsomer. It also made them feel much better.

No one ever left anything on his plate now. No one spent his money foolishly. No one broke his things purposely, or tore his clothes needlessly. There was an end to all the wastefulness.

And when the war was over the Gray Foxes grew prosperous again. Only this time there were no foxes as poor as there had been before the war. Neither were there any quite so rich.

But every one had plenty. And because all shared fairly, they all lived more happily.

"Which shows," added Father Thrift, "that everything which happens is for the best, and the world is a good place to live in, after all."



## RED SQUIRREL AND BUNNY COTTONTAIL

The ground was covered deep with snow, and it was bitter cold in the forest.

But Mr. Red Squirrel and his family were quite comfortable in their cozy home.

Mr. Red Squirrel lived with his wife and three children in the hollow of an old oak tree. They were a thrifty and industrious family.

They always had plenty to eat, besides something laid away for a rainy day.

That is because Mr. Red Squirrel was very careful about little things, and brought up his family to be the same.

Before the nuts were fully ripe, the squirrels would climb the trees, gnaw the stems, and drop the nuts to the ground.

Then they would scamper down and gather them into neat piles. They would eat some of the new nuts for breakfast, and put the rest away in the granaries.

They worked hard all the summer and autumn, getting food for the winter. And never a thing was wasted

in Mr. Squirrel's house.

On this cold winter's night Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel and the three little squirrels sat warm and snug in their home in the old oak tree. Suddenly there came a tiny tap at the door.

It might have been the wind. Mrs. Squirrel was not sure. She listened. The sound came again. Yes, some one certainly was knocking at their door.

Who could it be, this bitter cold night?

Mr. Squirrel got up and opened the door. At first he saw no one.



"Who's there?" he called, in his pleasant, cheery voice.

"It is I, neighbor," answered a weak voice, sadly. "Please let me in! I am cold and hungry!"

Mr. Squirrel opened the door wide, and said: "Yes, come in, come in. It is a bitter cold night, to be sure. Come in and let me shut the door. My tail is nearly frozen just from standing here."

Then there came hopping into the hollow of the tree trunk a rabbit. Poor Bunny Cottontail, how miserable he did look!

His coat was all dirty and ragged. And his poor little tail hung down behind instead of standing up straight and stiff, as a rabbit's tail ought to do.

His ears drooped, and his whiskers were broken and limp. He had rheumatism in one hind leg, and his eyes, which should have been as bright as Mr. Squirrel's, were dull and dim.

Altogether he looked as shabby and sad as a bunny could look—not at all like a respectable, well-brought-up rabbit.

Mr. Squirrel hastened to put poor Bunny into the warmest corner of the hollow. And Mrs. Squirrel brought him some food, which he ate eagerly.

The little squirrels were so astonished at the rabbit's appearance that they did not know what to make of him.

When Bunny was warm and rested, Mrs. Squirrel sent her little ones to bed.

Then she and Mr. Squirrel began to try to find out what had happened to make their poor neighbor so forlorn.

"How could I help it?" he cried mournfully. "I did not know that it would be so cold, nor that the snow would be so deep that I should not be able to get a bit of winter cabbage to eat.

"I am sure I am willing to work. I would take any trouble, but it is not a bit of use. Indeed, Neighbor Squirrel, I do not see how you have managed."

And he looked enviously around the neat, warm little nest.

"It was very simple," replied Mr. Squirrel, gravely. "We all helped and put away part of everything we found. If we found six nuts, we put away at least three in our storeroom. And nuts and acorns were very plentiful this autumn.

"So, though the winter is very hard, we shall have plenty. We have plenty for a friend, too. So eat as much as you will, neighbor, and don't spare the loaf."

It was very kind of Mr. Squirrel, but he could not help the poor rabbit much.

Bunny had been such an idle, wandering fellow that he could not be content to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel quietly and help to do the work of their little home. So in a few days he wandered away.

As he shivered in the cold and tried to find enough to eat, he often wished that he had been as wise and as thrifty as the Squirrel family.

And the Squirrel family, being as kind-hearted as they were thrifty, often thought of the poor rabbit with pity. They wondered how he was getting on, but they never heard of him again.



## SHAGGY BEAR'S MISTAKE

Father Thrift was carrying in wood for his fire. It had been a long and hard winter.

Suddenly he heard footsteps in the snow behind him. He looked around. And there—would you believe it!—stood his old friend, Shaggy Bear.

Shaggy was as thin as a shadow, and his teeth chattered with the cold.

"My, my, but you are out early this year!" exclaimed Father Thrift. "Come in and warm yourself by the fire."

Shaggy needed no coaxing. He was so cold that even his voice had frozen in his throat! At least he couldn't speak a word until he grew warm.

And the way that bear snuggled up to Father Thrift's fire was comical to see!

At last he managed to say: "Father Thrift, I shouldn't know this place if I had not lived here so long. You have a door on the cave, and two windows. And you have chairs and a table, and—and two beds.

"Why have you two beds, Father Thrift?"

"One is for company," answered the queer little old man.

"If you had just one more bed, I should say this was the House of the Three Bears."

And Shaggy laughed at his little joke. (Or perhaps the good meal which Father Thrift had prepared for him tickled his stomach.)

"Where have you been all winter?" asked Father Thrift.

"When the cold days came," said the bear, "I crawled into my cave in the rocks and curled myself up into a big ball. There I meant to stay until the warm days of spring.

"The snow made a door to my cave, and I intended to sleep all winter long.

"Then the wind swept the snow away from my door and I awoke and looked about. I thought that spring had come.

"And that is where I made my mistake. I should have gone to sleep again. But I was hungry, having had nothing to eat all winter. So I crawled out.

"The roots and the berries are still asleep under the snow. The fish are under the ice. There is nothing for me to do but return to my cave and go back to sleep."

"You must not do that," said Father Thrift. "That would be wasting time. And time is the most precious thing we have."

"Is it?" the bear asked in surprise.

"Indeed it is!" replied Father Thrift. "We may lose wealth, but by hard work and saving we may win it back."



"We may lose health, and with care and medicine restore it. But time that is lost is gone forever."

The bear listened to Father Thrift's wise talk, but he shivered and said: "Still, I am cold; and I can find no food to eat."

"I have a warm fire," said Father Thrift. "And I have food enough for us both, and to spare. I will share with you if you will help me with my work."

"That I will, gladly!" cried Shaggy, who was still smacking his lips over the fine dinner he had eaten. "But how does it happen that you have food, when the ground has been frozen so long?"

"When you learn to look ahead," replied Father Thrift, "you will find that easy enough."

"In the warm days I prepare for the cold days which I know are coming. I raise my crops. I gather berries and plums, and preserve them. The apples and the nuts will keep as they are."

"So, you see, instead of letting go to waste what I cannot use when food is plentiful, I save it for the days when food is scarce."

"Then do you rest all winter?" asked the bear.

"No!" said Father Thrift. "In the winter many things are waiting to be done. Then I make my clothes, shoes, furniture, tools, and other things."

"What are you making now?" questioned the bear, as Father Thrift whittled pieces of wood with his knife.

"These will be wooden spouts," answered Father Thrift. "You like sweet things—honey, for instance."

Father Thrift smiled. Do you know why?

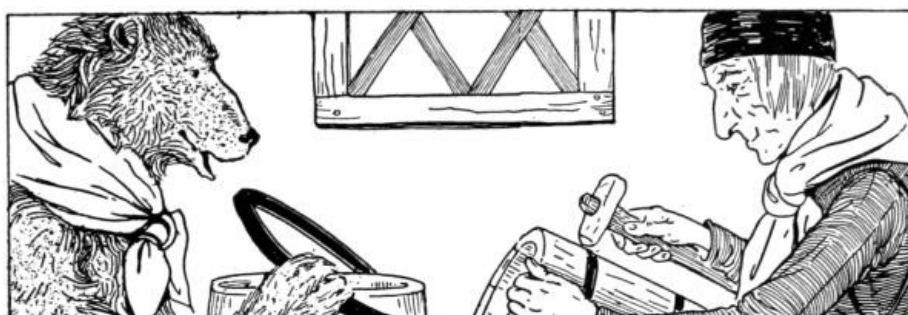
"Well, maple sirup and maple sugar are about as sweet as honey. These spouts will help us get all we want of both."

"Will they?" cried Shaggy eagerly. "How?"

"The maple trees, too," Father Thrift told him, "have been sleeping all winter. Most of the sap has been down in their roots. In the early spring it travels upward into the trunk and branches and the trees awake."

"The maple tree does not need all its sap. It is willing to give some of it to us. And when you have maple sirup you won't have to steal honey from the bees."

This pleased Shaggy so much that he stood up on his hind legs and danced a bear dance. How Father Thrift laughed!



# THE SWEETEST THING IN THE FOREST

Father Thrift spent the next few days in making wooden pails, in which to gather the maple sap.

What a lot of measuring and sawing and fitting and finishing it takes to make a few pails!

Shaggy Bear helped as much as he could. But bears are *such* clumsy things!

Finally one day Father Thrift said to Shaggy: "Now everything is ready. We have our spouts with which to draw the sap from the trees. And we have the wooden pails and some earthen crocks I made from clay last summer, in which to gather it.

"There is a large iron kettle we will use for boiling the sap down into sirup and sugar.

"To-morrow we will tap our trees."

"Why to-morrow?" asked the bear. "That seems too long to wait. Why not to-day?"

"Because," replied Father Thrift, "everything depends on time. There isn't time enough left to-day. To-morrow we will start work real early. And to get up early to-morrow we must get to bed early to-night."

"I don't see how I shall be able to sleep at all," grumbled the bear.

But in a few moments he was fast asleep where he sat.

He was a funny fellow!

Still, Father Thrift did not mind. He liked the quiet. When it was quiet he could think. In that he was quite different from many people, who like only to talk.

And he thought to himself: "Suppose that each person wastes one hour a day. A hundred days, a hundred hours. Multiply that by the number of people in the world—"



But the figures were too large even for Father Thrift to count up.

"If every one would use that hour each day in reading a good book, or in thinking, or in doing something else that is useful, how much better the world would be in another hundred years!"

Father Thrift sat and thought for a whole hour.

Then he waked the bear and each went to his own bed to rest for the night.

What a funny sight it was—a man and a bear sleeping side by side in the same room!

Early the next morning Father Thrift and the bear went to the maple grove to tap their trees.

Father Thrift bored holes in the tree trunks. Then he pounded a little spout into each hole for the sap to run through.

As they had no handles on their pails and crocks, they could not hang them on the spouts. Instead they set them down in the snow under the spouts.

The sun was getting warm, and was drawing up the sap from the roots of the tree into its branches. Soon you could hear it drip, drip, dripping into the pails and the crocks.





Shaggy Bear was too astonished to talk. He put out his paw, and a great drop of shining yellow maple sap fell on it. Then he licked his paw. Then he grunted, a funny bear grunt of surprise and pleasure.

*Mmmmmm!* It was good! It was sweet, truly. And what a delicious flavor it had!

The bear put out his paw again and again. And how he did lick the sap off it! My, oh, *my!* it was sweet! Not even the honey of the bee tasted so good. It was like nothing else in the whole forest.

Meanwhile Father Thrift was arranging his kettle and pans and building a fire.

"Now let us pour all the sap into one pail," he said, "and perhaps we shall have enough to start boiling."

"Oh, but that may spoil it!" cried Shaggy Bear.

"The sap is made sweeter by boiling," said Father Thrift. But the bear did not see how that could be.

When the sap began to boil, Father Thrift told Shaggy to stir it, so that it would not burn.

Suddenly the bear began jumping about and crying: "Father Thrift, come here, come here!"

Father Thrift ran over to see what had happened.

Shaggy was all excitement.

"Look!" he cried. "Look in the kettle! We had much there. Now we have little. I told you the fire would spoil it!"

"No," replied Father Thrift, smilingly, "the fire has not spoiled anything. When the sap boils, the water in it goes away in steam. And the longer it boils, the more the water goes away.

"This time we will not let it boil so very long, and then we shall have sirup. But the next kettle of sap we will boil longer and then we shall have maple sugar."

When the sirup grew thick, Father Thrift said, "Taste!" And the bear tasted.

"Oh, Father Thrift," he cried in delight, "it is the best thing I have ever tasted! Truly, the boiling improves it."

Then when the maple sugar was done, Father Thrift called Shaggy.

"Taste *this*," he said.

Ah, how good it was! Nothing like it had ever gone into Shaggy Bear's mouth before. Never had he tasted such sweetness.

And, oh, what a wonderful meal they had that night! Father Thrift made golden corn cakes, and he and Shaggy ate the hot cakes with fresh maple sirup poured over them.

The bear grew thoughtful after supper.

"Now I know why I used to get into so much trouble," he said. "I have had too much idle time on my hands.

"After this I will work hard and learn. I—I think I could help you a lot, Father Thrift. Will—you—let—me—stay—if—I—do?"

"I shall be glad to have you stay, always," said Father Thrift.

And the bear was so overjoyed at what Father Thrift said that he cried.



## ROBINS, CROWS, AND BLACKBIRDS

A soft little breeze was blowing. It was warm, and it had in it the smell of green things growing—trees, and buds, and grass, and flowers.

Little birds were singing. And they had joy and gladness in their voices. And the colors of the rainbow were in their feathers.

Little brooks were flowing—flowing and growing into rivers. They sparkled in the merry sunshine, and their laughter could be heard everywhere they went.

The whole forest was glad. Why?

Because it was spring, merry spring. And spring is the gladdest, happiest time of all the year.

Father Thrift was plowing his garden and Shaggy Bear was helping him.

And do you know how they worked together?

Father Thrift held the handles of the plow and Shaggy pulled it. He was the horse. A funnier sight you have never seen!

The ground was hard, so that no seed could grow in it. Father Thrift turned the earth over with his plow. This loosened the soil and made it soft.

The robins followed the plow and found nice large angleworms for their breakfast. Then they sang this song:

Cheerily cheer-up! Cheerily cheer-up!  
Cheerily cheer, we're glad you're here,  
Little fat worms. Oh, cheerily cheer-up,  
Cheerily cheer, we're glad you're here!

But the little fat worms only turned and squirmed. They sang no song at all.



The crows and the blackbirds followed Father Thrift, too. They ate the grub worms and the beetles and other insects which they found.

Then, when the ground was ready, Father Thrift and Shaggy Bear planted the seeds.

The robins did not follow them now.

But the crows and the blackbirds did. And do you know what they were doing?

They were eating the seeds almost as fast as Father Thrift and Shaggy dropped them into the ground.

Father Thrift stopped in his work.

"Crows and blackbirds," he said, "you must not do that."

"Why?" asked one old crow. "We always have done it."

"Yes, I know you have," replied Father Thrift. "And that is what has given you such a bad name with the farmer."

"By eating the seed or pulling up sprouting corn you spoil the crop. And so you have less food for yourselves in the end."

"How is that?" asked Cousin Blackbird.

"Well," explained Father Thrift, "every grain of corn you eat now would make ears of corn if you let it stay in the ground to grow."

"And of every ear of corn grown some kernels are left in the field in the shocking. So that for every kernel not eaten now you would have many kernels in the autumn."

"Besides, if you will keep the bad bugs and worms and grasshoppers out of my garden, I promise to give you every tenth ear of all the corn I grow."

Then the crows got together. And all you could hear from them was a loud "Caw, caw, caw!"

But they must have agreed that Father Thrift's proposal was a fair one. The old crow spoke for all the crows. He said:

"We will do as you ask, Father Thrift. We wish all farmers were as reasonable with us."

"We help the farmer, but we get no credit for it. We eat many, many grasshoppers and beetles and worms and caterpillars and weevils every year."

"These would be at work destroying the farmer's crops if we did not eat them. And, for all that, the farmer is always chasing and killing us."

"No," said Father Thrift, "the farmer does not dislike you for the good you do. He dislikes you for the harm you do. Your bad habits make you unpopular. Why don't you give them up?"

"Caw, caw, caw!" cried all the crows. I suppose they meant, "Yes, yes, yes."

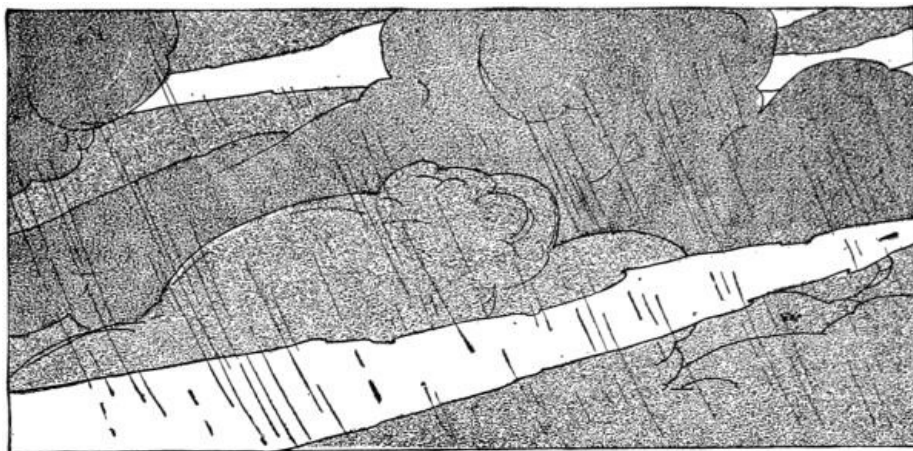
But whether or not they meant what they said I don't know.

As for the blackbirds, whatever was agreeable to the crows was satisfactory to them. And they flew away singing, "Conk-err-ee! Conk-err-ee!"

And as Father Thrift and Shaggy Bear sat down under a tree to rest, Mr. Robin sang his song from the topmost bough. It was like this:

Cheerily cheer-up! Cheerily cheer-up!  
Cheerily cheer, five of us here;  
Mother and me, and babies three. Cheer up,  
Cheerily cheer, we're happy here.

You see, Mr. Robin's English was not perfect, but he was too happy to be careful.



## THE LITTLE RAINDROPS

Every seventh day Father Thrift rested. To-day was Sunday, the seventh day.

Father Thrift, as usual, arose just as the gray clouds were bidding the earth good-by.

How that queer little old man did enjoy those summer mornings!

Not many people get up early enough to know what they are like.

It is then that the birds sing for Father Sun to awake. And the chorus of thanksgiving which arises from the woods and the fields is enough to gladden any one's heart.

Every boy and girl should learn to know these beautiful morning hours.

But this morning the dark clouds lingered longer than usual. That was because they had brought the raindrops from their home in the sky to visit the earth below.

The flowers lifted their grateful heads to greet the raindrops.

The thirsty roots under the ground were made glad by them. And so were the leaves and the buds and all the growing green things above the ground.



The frogs jumped about in their glee and croaked joyfully, "Oh, what fun we have!"

The brook rushed rejoicing to the river, and the river ran to the sea. And both sang on their way.

But the birds and the squirrels were not so happy when the raindrops came tumbling down from the sky. They hid in their nests and under the leaves of the trees and waited for them to go away.

Even Shaggy Bear did not like the rain. He hid in the cave, to keep his fur dry.

Now the time was drawing near when most people were waking—that is, in the cities. The farmer has learned to know the beautiful early hours of the morning.

"Let us play," cried a tiny raindrop to the others. "Let us play and stay here always. For the earth is a beautiful place."

But the older and wiser raindrops trickled away and hid almost anywhere they could.

Some of them hid in Father Thrift's garden. Some of them jumped into the brook.

They knew they were sent down to the earth to do some good, and not to spend their time in playing. They had plenty of time in the sky for play.

So if they wished to stay on the earth they must work.

The little raindrops that hid in Father Thrift's garden would help to make the plants grow.

Those that jumped into the brook would help to give a good cool drink to all who were thirsty.

Then Father Sun came out from behind the gray clouds.

"Come, little raindrops, down on earth," he said. "Those of you that are not busy, or are not needed there, must come home. You have important work to do elsewhere."

And, like the good father that he was, he gathered up all that he could find and put them into pretty white and blue boats. And the wind gently sailed them across the sky.

Then the Rain Fairies and the Sun Fairies joined hands until they made a beautiful arch from earth to heaven.

We call this arch the rainbow. The gay colors are the pretty dresses of the fairies.

Now the birds of the forest came forth from their nests. They fluttered their little wings and sent the raindrops which had rested on them down to the flowers and the grasses.

Then they flew into the tree tops, where Father Sun could see them. And, as though to make up for lost time, they sang more sweetly than they did on clear days.

How their songs gladdened the forest!

Father Thrift sat on a log to listen to that orchestra of a thousand throats trilling from the tree tops.

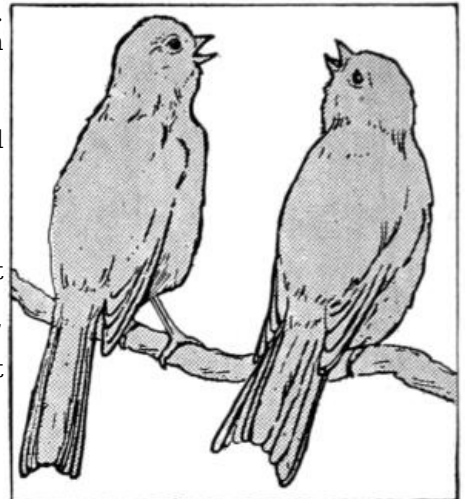
And Shaggy Bear came out from the cave and sat down beside him.

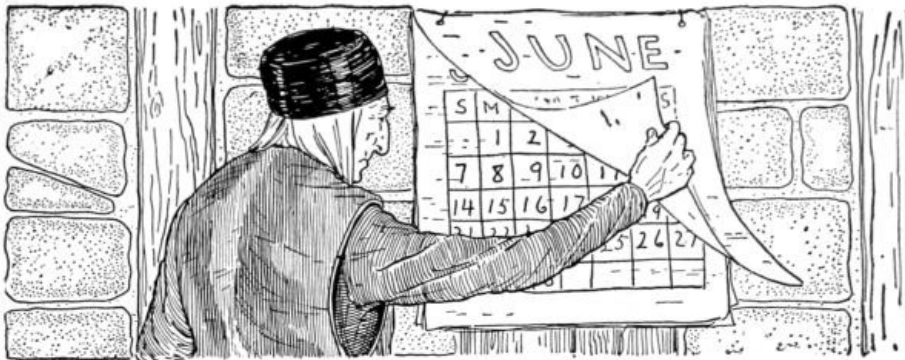
"A pretty world it would be without the birds!" said Father Thrift.

"How dull it would be without their colors! The rainbow cannot match them.

"How cheerless it would be without their song! Man cannot equal it."

And you may be sure that Father Thrift and Shaggy Bear did not forget the birds in their prayers that night.





## TROUBLE IN THE FOREST

The next day was Monday, the first of July. Father Thrift turned the leaf of his homemade calendar. Then he and Shaggy Bear went out into the garden to work.

All of a sudden they heard such a commotion! They looked up and saw a great flock of birds flying toward them.

There were robins and bluebirds and kingbirds and bobolinks and brown thrashers and catbirds and meadow larks and woodpeckers and wrens, and all the other birds of the forest.

Did they come to sing for Father Thrift because it was the first of July?

No, not one of the birds was singing now. They were chattering and crying, but you could not make out what the fuss was all about.

To Father Thrift and Shaggy it sounded something like this:

Charr, charr, caw, caw, churr, churr, chee, chee,  
Peenk, peenk, quit, quit, chuck, chuck, whee, whee,  
Tzip, tzip, thsee, thsee, conk-err-ee, whack,  
Jay, jay, mew, mew, whip, chip, crack, tchack,  
R-r-r-r-r-r!!

“R-r-r-r-r-r” meant, “We’re angry. Next time we will fight them.”

Now the woodpeckers drummed for quiet: “Rrr-runk, tunk, tunk!”

Then Mr. Robin walked up to Father Thrift. He said, “Oh, Father Thrift, we have come to tell you that the boys have been very mean to us. Let me tell you what they did to us.

“While Mrs. Robin and I were away they climbed up into the tree where we had built our nest and stole our eggs.” And there were tears in his bright eyes.



Then Mr. Bluebird came. He was a pretty little fellow, and mannerly too. "Oh, Father Thrift," he said, "let me tell you what the boys did to me.

"My nest was in a hole in your apple tree. The boys tore the green apples off the tree and threw them all about. They stuffed them into the hole where my nest was and now I have no home.

"They are not afraid even of you."

Then Mr. Kingbird came up. He said: "What Cousin Bluebird has just told you is true. One of the apples struck my nest and knocked it down.

"There were four speckled eggs in it. I have lost not only my home but my pretty eggs with it. Is that right, Father Thrift?"

And sadness and sorrow were in his voice.

Just then Brown Thrasher came along. He was hopping on one foot. "Oh, Father Thrift," he said, "look what has happened to me! I was harming no one. I was just singing a song, when I was hit in the leg."

"And pretty are the songs you can sing," said Father Thrift. "Many, many times have I been made happy by your sweet and cheerful notes. But who was it that hurt you?"

"The boys," replied Brown Thrasher. "They hit me with a stone from their sling shot and broke my leg."

Now Mrs. Bobolink came up. "Oh, Father Thrift," she said, sobbing, "hear me!

"While I put our house in order Mr. Bobolink would stand guard to see that no enemies came near us.

"And he would sing to me at the same time. Such sweet songs as he could sing! I think no other bird could equal him.

"We, too, had some eggs in our nest. And we were happy. Yesterday Mr. Bobolink was perched on the tip of a bough, singing, when suddenly he fell to the ground.

"I flew to see what the trouble was. And do you know what had happened?

"He was dead. He had been hit on the head with a stone. Not far away I saw the boys who killed him.

"To-day we dug a grave and buried him under his favorite tree." And poor Mrs. Bobolink cried harder than ever.

Then Father and Mother Meadow Lark came up. "Oh, Father Thrift," they cried, "listen to what has happened to us!

"We had four little children in a nest in the field. The nest was covered over with grasses. We thought it perfectly safe.

"But while we were away getting food for our little ones, some one stole them all."

And the Meadow Larks wept as though their hearts would break.

"It must have been the boys!" chorused all the birds.

Father Thrift looked very angry.

"All this is very sad," he said. "I am sorry indeed to hear it. But, little friends, go home and make the best of things for the present.

"Shaggy Bear and I will find some way to help you."

Then the birds flew away. And they made such a noise that the clouds trembled in the sky.



## TWO BAD BOYS

For a while neither Father Thrift nor the bear spoke.

Then the queer little old man said:

"Those boys must be punished, Shaggy. They must be taught a lesson. Killing birds is no joke.

"To-morrow morning take your lunch with you and go to the north edge of the forest. There you will find a crooked road that is little traveled.

"I believe that this is the road over which the boys came. They will come again.

"Hide yourself behind a tree and watch for them. And when you catch them bring them to me."

"Yes, yes," said Shaggy, "I certainly will."

So early the next morning Father Thrift packed the bear's lunch and off Shaggy started for the north edge of the forest.

But he returned late that night, tired and cross, without the boys.

The same thing happened the next day, and the next.

Shaggy was so discouraged by this time that he thought it of no use to try again.

But Father Thrift said: "Go just this once more. And if you do not have better luck to-day you need not go again."

So Shaggy went for the fourth time.

And, as it happened, he did have better luck.

When he reached the edge of the forest he seated himself beside a large tree near the road, to watch. But the kind breeze was blowing so softly that he soon fell asleep.

And as he slept he dreamed a dream—a very strange sort of dream.

He dreamed he was the king of Honeybee Land. All of his subjects were honeybees, and there were exactly one million of them.

In another month there would be half a million more of them.

If he had so much honey now, think how much more he would have when the other half million honeybees started to gather it!

Now all that he had to do was to eat the honey as fast as the honeybees made it.

That seemed easy enough. *Um-m*, how he loved that honey!

But soon he found out that bees are very busy and very thrifty little things.

Oh, how very, *very* busy they kept him trying to eat all the honey they made!

Each day his stomach was getting larger and larger. How much farther could it stretch?

Then, "Whizz!" he woke up with a start.

"I thought so! I thought so!" he said to himself, as he placed his paws on his stomach and rolled up his eyes.



But, no, his stomach hadn't exploded at all. He could feel that.

Besides, there was an arrow lying right beside him. The arrow must have hit him.

Just then he happened to remember where he was.

"The boys!" he said to himself. "The boys! In mischief, with a bow and arrows."

He looked around. And there they were, sitting under a tree not a hundred feet away from him!

He could see a bow and arrows on the ground beside them. But what were they doing?

They were holding something in their hands. First they would look at it, then they would blow on it. Then they would look again and blow again.

The bear crept closer. Everything was clear to him now! The boys had killed a bird and they were trying to find the spot where the arrow had struck it.

So interested were they in this that they did not notice the bear stealing up behind them.

When he got right over them he gave a dreadful growl: "Gr-r-r-r!"

It was very loud and very fierce.

"Why did you kill that bird?" he asked. "I have a good mind to eat you alive." And he gave another fierce growl.

The boys acted like frightened rabbits. They were too astonished to speak.

The bear picked up the bow and arrows.

"One, attention!" he commanded. "Two, get ready! Three, go!"

The boys took to the path which led toward their homes. But the bear called them back.

"You don't understand," he said. "Now, go the other way. To-night you must report to Father Thrift. Gr-r-r-r! And not another word."

This last command must have been a bear joke, for the boys had not uttered a word.

Then away they all started—the boys as Shaggy's prisoners—for the cave in the forest.





## THE BOYS AND THE BIRDS

The boys spent an uncomfortable night in Father Thrift's cave.

Half the time they could not sleep. And, worse still, the other half they dreamed such dreadful dreams!

But the next morning, after they had had breakfast with Father Thrift and Shaggy Bear, the boys felt much better.

Still, they had a feeling that something terrible was about to happen to them. How they longed to go home!

Then the queer little old man seated himself on a log just outside the door of the cave.

"Shaggy Bear," he said, "go, tell Jenny Wren to ask all the birds of the forest to come here."

Soon all the birds had come. And, oh! what excitement there was when they saw the boys!

"Shoot them with an arrow! Hit them with a stone! Kill them!" the angry little creatures cried.

Father Thrift lifted his hand for order.

When things were quiet, and the birds had gathered around him, the queer little old man stood up. In a soft and somewhat sad voice he said to the birds:

"My friends, let us act calmly and justly. Let us consider well before we decide on the punishment which these boys should receive if they are found guilty."

"But," protested Mr. Robin, "they climbed into our tree and stole our eggs."

"They ruined my home," cried Cousin Bluebird, "and they wasted your apples in doing it!"



"Yes, and they knocked down my nest and broke all the eggs in it," added Mr. Kingbird.

"They broke my leg with a stone from a sling shot," piped Brown Thrasher.

"And they killed my poor husband," cried Mrs. Bobolink.

"They stole our four little children," sobbed the Meadow Larks.

"And they shot a bird with an arrow yesterday," added Shaggy Bear. "Here is the bird. Here, too, are the bow and the arrow." And he handed them all to Father Thrift.

"Why, they've shot my cousin, Blackbird!" cried the Crow, who had been quiet up to now. "I have a good mind to bite off their noses and scratch out their eyes."

"R-r-r-r-r! Charr! charr! charr!" All the birds became very much excited. They screamed and fluttered their wings, and their eyes shone with anger.

The boys were badly frightened. But Father Thrift quickly restored order.

He said: "Let us first hear what the boys have to say. We will ask them a few questions."

He faced the boys. "Did you do what the birds say you did?" he asked.

The boys hung their heads in shame.

Then one of them answered, after a pause, "I guess so."

"*Why* did you do it?" asked Father Thrift.

"Well," replied the other boy, "most of the birds are no good, anyway. They just eat everything we plant."

"What of yours have they eaten?" asked Father Thrift.

"The robins have been stealing our cherries," said the boy, "until we have hardly any left for ourselves.

"The bluebirds eat our berries and grapes.

"The kingbirds eat not only our fruit, but our honeybees as well.

"The brown thrashers eat our raspberries and currants, while whole flocks of bobolinks get their food from our oat fields.

"The meadow larks eat our grain.

"And as for the blackbirds and crows, they are the worst thieves in the world. They even pull up our sprouting grain.

"So why shouldn't we kill the birds? They are our enemies, and they do nothing but harm.

"And, besides, we haven't killed more than a dozen of them. Who would miss a dozen in a world so full of birds?"

By this time most of the birds were quivering with anger.

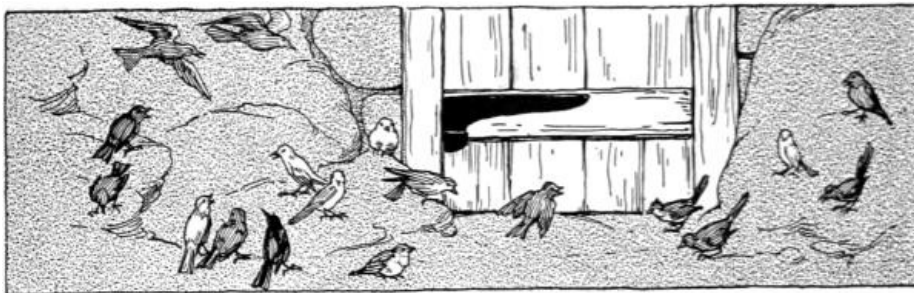
And they cried again: "Shoot them with an arrow! Hit them with a stone! Kill them!

"Who would miss two in a world so full of boys?"

"Listen, my friends," said Father Thrift. "I agree with you that the boys deserve to be treated in the same way that they have treated you. They have been cruel.

"Still, let us not act in haste or anger. Let us think matters over well. Perhaps we shall find that some wrong has been done on both sides.

"Go, now, and return at two o'clock. We will decide then what it is best to do."



## INSECTS AND WORMS

Long before two o'clock that afternoon the birds returned to their place in front of Father Thrift's cave.

Some of them sat on the ground, some on the low branches of the trees, and others in the bushes.

Now and again Shaggy Bear came out to tell some bird that Father Thrift wished to speak with him.

Evidently important things were going on within the cave. But what?

Oh, how the time dragged to those waiting birds! Would two o'clock never come?

At last the cave door opened again, and Shaggy Bear came out with his prisoners.

Shaggy was the sheriff, and his business was to take care that the boys did not run away.

Hardly were they seated when Father Thrift came out of the cave.

In one hand he carried a roll of paper, and with the other he adjusted the spectacles on his nose. He looked just like the judge he was supposed to be.

As in a regular courtroom, every one straightened up and was all attention when the judge came.

The queer little old man seated himself on the stump of a tree.

Before him stood a high bench or table, made of rough boards. On this he spread out his paper.

Then, turning toward Shaggy Bear, he said, "The sheriff and the prisoners will please step forward."

And as they stood before him, Father Thrift read to the boys the court's decision.



"The one who sins against the birds," the decision ran, "sins against man's best friends.

"If we destroyed the birds, we ourselves could not live. Within a few years there would be so many insects and worms that crops could not be raised and plants could not grow. The bugs and the caterpillars would eat all the leaves off the trees, while the worms would destroy the roots.

"The flies and other harmful insects would kill the cattle. And then they would carry sickness and disease among us.

"Why, the grasshoppers would dance on our very tables, while the crickets sat on the dishes and played tunes!

"The ants would use our kitchens for parade grounds, and the worms would crawl under our feet, in our houses.

"Yet you said that the birds were your enemies, and that they do only harm.

"You complained of the robins and the bluebirds; the kingbirds and the brown thrashers; the bobolinks and the meadow larks; the crows and the blackbirds.

"So I have taken pains to look into the habits of each of these.

"The robin, I find, works during the whole season to make it possible for the farmer to raise his crops. He is a natural enemy of bugs and worms.

"He gets no pay for this work and asks for none. And the only reason he eats your cherries is because you have destroyed the wild fruit trees and berry bushes that used to grow by the roadside. Plant them there again and the robin, and all the other birds too, will spare your fruit.

"The bluebird catches the bad bugs and grasshoppers and beetles and spiders and caterpillars in your orchard. And he very rarely takes even a bite of your berries or grapes.

"The kingbird is a fine flycatcher and he does much good. Sometimes he does eat a honeybee, it is true, but it must be because he mistakes it for a large fly.

"The brown thrasher makes his home in the swamps and groves. He does eat some raspberries and currants, in addition to the harmful insects he devours, but nearly all of these must be wild ones.

"The few oats the bobolinks eat you could never miss, because these birds feed mostly on insects and the seeds of useless plants.

"The meadow lark saves thousands of dollars every year on the hay crop. He builds his nest on the ground in the meadow and feeds himself and his large family on the crickets and grasshoppers he finds there.

"The crow and the blackbird, I know, eat some of your corn. But they will not touch the seed corn if you put coal tar on it.

"Both of these birds do a great deal of good, for which they get no credit. In the spring they follow the plow in search of large grub worms, of which they are very fond. They also eat grasshoppers, and weevils, and caterpillars.

"All of which goes to prove that the more birds we have, the fewer bugs there are, to bother us. And the fewer bugs there are, the more food we have.

"Therefore, I find that you two boys are guilty of a great wrong. Not only have you killed the farmer's most valuable friends, but you have destroyed food as well.

"Your punishment will be one year in prison for every bird that you have killed."

At this the boys almost dropped to the ground, they were so badly frightened.

"Oh, Father Thrift," they cried, "please don't put us in prison! We have learned a lesson, and we promise never to kill another bird if you will only let us go."

"My friends, what do *you* think?" asked Father Thrift, turning to the birds.

The hearts of the birds softened at the sight of the boys' distress. And they said, "Give them another chance, Father Thrift."

"But theirs is a serious offense," Father Thrift said gravely.

Then he turned toward the boys.

"I will release you on one condition," he said, "and that is that you will henceforth be kind to all harmless living creatures, and protect them from cruel usage.

"Also, that you will ask all the other boys, and their fathers as well, to do the same.

"Build bird houses for your feathered friends and encourage them to come to your villages and farms.

"In the end you will profit greatly by it."

"We promise to do that," the boys agreed eagerly.

"Now Shaggy Bear will help you to find your way out of the forest," said Father Thrift.

"Your bow and arrows I shall keep, for you will never want them again.

"And when you get home, tell your fathers and mothers, your grandfathers and grandmothers, your brothers and sisters, and the rest of my friends in the town, that Father Thrift sends them his best regards."

Then the boys said good-by, and they wasted no time in going.



## AFTER MANY DAYS

The whole town was searching for the two missing boys. No one could imagine what had happened to them.

"We shall never see them again!" sobbed their mothers. But they did see them.

That very day, when the little birds had gone to sleep in their nests, and the crickets chirped by the roadside, while night and the stars looked down upon the earth, the two tired and hungry boys appeared.

Their mothers and fathers were overjoyed at their safe return.

All the townspeople crowded about them.

But the people could hardly believe the strange story they told.

"Father Thrift! Father Thrift!" they cried. "Why, it cannot be!"

For this was none other than the quaint old town in which the queer little old man had lived for so many years.

"Upon our word and honor!" said the boys earnestly. "See, we cross our hearts."

And they did.

This seemed to satisfy most of the villagers that the boys were telling the truth.

"Still, the forest is dense with trees and brush," said one old man, shaking his head doubtfully. "And it is alive with wild and dangerous animals.

"Not one of *us* has ever dared to go beyond the edge of *that* forest. How could Father Thrift live there?"

"Let us not doubt," said another old man. "We had better follow the advice which has been sent us.

"Have we not suffered since Father Thrift left us because we would not take his advice?"

"We did not appreciate him when he was here. We have learned to appreciate him since he went away."

So the wonderful story was told and retold for miles and miles around. And Father Thrift's good advice was taken to heart.

And the birds came by hundreds to live in the neighborhood.

The crops grew better each year.

And the people felt happier.

Then they pondered the things which Father Thrift had taught them. And they did again as they had done when he was with them.

They lived simply, spent wisely, and wasted nothing.

And the quaint old town and the country around it grew prosperous, as in the days of old.

Then after many days the people said:

"We must enter the wood at all costs—even at the risk of our lives.



"We must find good Father Thrift and do him honor."

So they went down the crooked road that led to the forest and went in. The two boys led the way.

They heard the birds singing in the trees.

They saw the squirrels leaping and running.

They heard the ripple of the silvery brook.

They breathed the perfume of the pine trees and the firs.

They traced the footprints of bears, and rabbits, and deer.

Every little thing interested them now.

They gazed at the tender blue sky above. Never before had it looked so beautiful.

Never had the grass seemed so fresh and sweet and green.

Nor had the flowers ever seemed so richly colored and so sweetly scented.

Truly, the forest was a glorious place!

And nowhere—nowhere did they find the dreadful animals which they had lived to fear these many years.

But they found a cave, a very strange sort of cave. It had two windows and a door.

Inside were two beds and two chairs, and a table and a fireplace.

On the wall hung a home-made calendar.

Just outside the door was a high bench or table, and back of it stood a tree stump.

"This is the place where Father Thrift lived," said the boys. "How well we remember it!" But Father Thrift was not there now. The place was vacant.

"The queer little old man must have gone to live in the beautiful, happy, sunny land of which he often talked," said one of the men. And the others agreed with him.

Still stands the cave in the forest. People from miles and miles away visit it.

The guide tells them the wonderful story of Father Thrift and his animal friends. And it seems that with each retelling the story grows more and still more wonderful.

And there is a bird that lives in the wood which on moonlight nights, whether he sits on a branch, or hops on the ground, or flies about, is always heard whistling, "Fa-ther Thrift! Fa-ther Thrift!"

Many people misunderstand and think that he is saying, "Whip-poor-will! Whip-poor-will!"

But why any one should wish to whip any one else I do not know. For the world is such a happy place.

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\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FATHER THRIFT AND HIS ANIMAL FRIENDS \*\*\*

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