

Project Gutenberg's Little White Fox and his Arctic Friends, by Roy J. Snell

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LITTLE WHITE FOX AND HIS ARCTIC FRIENDS



"Such ugly, bent noses I never saw before in all my life, either."
FRONTISPIECE. See Page 27

LITTLE WHITE FOX AND HIS ARCTIC FRIENDS

BY

ROY J. SNELL

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
GEORGE F. KERR



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LITTLE WHITE FOX AND HIS ARCTIC FRIENDS

CHAPTER I

LITTLE WHITE FOX MAKES A DISCOVERY

LITTLE WHITE FOX was very, very much worried, for something dreadful had happened, something he couldn't account for at all: Tdariuk, the reindeer, was dead!

Tdariuk was not related to Little White Fox. And he wasn't a bit in the world like him. He was many times bigger than Little White Fox would ever be, and he was quite different from him in every way. But all the same, Little White Fox loved him. If you had asked him why he loved the big reindeer, he would probably have told you that, for one thing, Tdariuk, in spite of his huge body, was very gentle and kind. None of the little animals of the tundra was afraid of him. Little Mrs. Ptarmigan calmly hunted for dry blueberries and weed seed right beside him while he cropped his moss. And when he drew close to the shore by the sea, Little Brown Seal never thought of such a thing as slipping off his rock and hiding in the water. Even if there were no other reason, wouldn't Tdariuk's gentleness alone make Little White Fox love him?

Now when Little White Fox discovered that his big, kind friend was dead, he ran home as fast as his legs could carry him to tell his mother the sad news.

"Mother! Mother!" he called tumbling into his home under the great rock. "Tdariuk is dead!"

"Tdariuk dead!" cried Madam White Fox. "Who could have been mean enough to kill him?"

"I don't know who killed him, but he's dead, I know that," said Little White Fox, the tears running down his cheeks.

"It must have been Old Man Gray Wolf, or Omnok, the hunter," said Madam White Fox, wiping her eyes with her paw. "For my part, I could easily wish them both dead themselves. None of us is safe as long as they are about. But who told you Tdariuk was dead?"

"No one told me, I found it out for myself," boasted Little White Fox proudly, quite forgetting his sorrow in thinking what a wise young chap he was.

"*You* found it out!" exclaimed his mother. "Pray, tell me how?"

"Why, you see," explained Little White Fox, with an air of deep mystery. "I was down on the tundra, at the foot of Saw Tooth Mountain, looking all around to see

what I could see. And all of a sudden I came right on one of Tdariuk's great, fine antlers lying there in the snow. Now, what do you think of that? And when I went on a little farther, there was the other one! And then I knew, of course, that Tdariuk was dead."

When Madam White Fox heard that, she smiled a little and stopped wiping her eyes. But all she said was: "Keep your eyes wide open, my son, and one of these days you will see something very strange."

Little White Fox thought that a queer way to answer him. Why, she hadn't even told him he was smart to discover about Tdariuk.

"What do you mean, mother? What will I see? Tell me what I will see! *Please* tell me what I will see!" teased Little White Fox.

But not another word would Madam Fox tell him. Little White Fox wondered why she dried her tears for Tdariuk so quickly, but he couldn't find that out, either.

And so every day and all day, Little White Fox went peering curiously about everywhere, just as his mother had told him to do, trying to find the something that was "very strange." He looked all around among the sand dunes by the ocean, but there was nothing strange there. He went in and out among the big rocks at the foot of Saw Tooth Mountain and came near falling into one of Omnok's cruel traps, but there was nothing strange there. He went here and there, and back and forth, all over the tundra, but there was nothing strange there.

Hunt as he would, Little White Fox could find nothing strange anywhere. He had grown quite discouraged, when one day, when he was searching down among the scrub willows by the river, his ear caught a familiar sound. "Ark! Ark! Ark!"

Little White Fox couldn't believe his ears.

"Why, that's queer!" he exclaimed. "It sounds just like Tdariuk, the reindeer. But it can't be Tdariuk. How could it be Tdariuk, when Tdariuk's dead?"

Then he heard it again, much louder this time and quite close: "Ark! Ark! Ark!"

Little White Fox, for once in his life, was too astonished to say a word. He just held his breath and waited. And in just another moment out walked Tdariuk, as big and gentle as ever, and very much alive indeed. And—on his head he wore a brand new pair of antlers, bigger than the others and all covered with velvet! My! how handsome those antlers were!

Little White Fox didn't stop to ask a single question. He just gave Tdariuk one long look and then whirled around and ran home as fast as he could travel.

He burst breathlessly into the cave and started to tell his mother that Tdariuk wasn't dead. But it wasn't news to her: she had known it all the time. Little White Fox, however, had found out the something very strange that she had hoped he would find, and had done it all by himself. Therefore Madam Fox was very happy as she curled down on the floor for her afternoon nap.

CHAPTER II

LITTLE MISS PTARMIGAN FOOLS HIM

WHEN Little White Fox saw that he had really found out about Tdariuk, the reindeer, all by himself, he became very wise. The next time one of his friends disappeared from the tundra, he didn't say a word about it to his mother, but went searching, searching, everywhere, every day.

This time it was Little Miss Ptarmigan who had disappeared. Probably you don't know Miss Ptarmigan, for she lives only in cold lands where there is plenty of snow. But she is a very interesting young person. She is a bit larger than Madam Partridge and not quite so large as Madam Prairie Hen. And a very dainty little lady she is, too, for all winter—and that's just the time Little White Fox had known her—she had worn a perfectly white gown, quite as white as the coat he wore himself. And if she hadn't worn pink shoes and stockings, he probably would never have been able to find her in the snow at all.

Now, if Little White Fox had been as old as his mother, he would have been trying all the time to catch Little Miss Ptarmigan and carry her off to his home for mincemeat. That is what grown-up foxes do to the Ptarmigan folks when they get a chance. But Little White Fox was a very small chap, and didn't give much thought to mincemeat. All he thought about was having a good time, so almost every day he hunted up Miss Ptarmigan, and they had a grand game of hide and seek. It was always an exciting game, too, on account of Miss Ptarmigan's white dress, and the only way Little White Fox could find her was by watching for her pink shoes and stockings as she hid away in a snow bank. And when she sat on her feet, he could almost never find her at all.

"You just wait, Miss," cried Little White Fox one day. "When summer comes, I'll get you!"

"You will, will you?" replied Miss Ptarmigan. "How will you do it?"

"Why, in the summer the snow will be gone, and the ground will be all brown. Then I will be able to find you anywhere!" Little White Fox gave a hop, skip and jump that ended in a somersault, so tickled was he with his own smartness.

"Oh, indeed!" said Miss Ptarmigan, looking very wise and mysterious.

That was all she said, but Little White Fox wasn't fussed. He hadn't lain curled up on the grass mat in his home thinking about it night after night for nothing.

One day when the snow was nearly all gone, Little Miss Ptarmigan suddenly disappeared. Little White Fox didn't believe she was dead. He remembered how he had been fooled by Tdariuk, and he remembered, too, how she had looked when he talked about catching her. Also, he remembered how he had found out the truth about Tdariuk. Therefore, being a wise youngster, as I have said, he didn't say a word about it to his mother. He just went quietly about, looking, looking everywhere for Miss Ptarmigan.

In the meantime, Miss Ptarmigan had been making trouble for herself. Silly old Mrs. White Owl had been telling her all winter how very well white suited her complexion. And now summer had come, and Mother Ptarmigan had forbidden her to go outdoors at all till her new brown summer suit was finished. Miss Ptarmigan hated indoors, and she couldn't understand what difference her dress made, anyway. But she never thought of disobeying till one fine, warm day when her mother was away from home. Little Miss Ptarmigan grew very lonesome.

"I want to go out in the sunshine," she kept saying to herself. "There can't be a bit of harm in it. I am sure I would see Old Mrs. White Owl, and she would say something nice about my white dress."

Down at the foot of the mountain was some one else, a some one who didn't think much about the sunshine and the flowers. It was Master Black Fox. He was thinking of his sausage grinder. It hadn't been used much of late, and he was afraid it might get lazy. "A plump chub of a Ptarmigan would grind nicely," he said to himself, smacking his lips, "but they all wear brown dresses these days, and one cannot tell them from the weeds and grass."

Just then his eyes opened wide. "Can I believe it?" he whispered. "Is that one of them going down the mountain this minute—and with a white dress on? Yes, sir, it is!"

Then Mr. Fox looked all about him very sharply, this way and that, for his own coat was black as coal, and could be seen quite well against the brown grass when he moved. But when he lay quite still, you couldn't tell him from a stone. He was not afraid that Little Miss Ptarmigan would see him. He knew where she was, and could hide behind rocks until he came close to her.

After Mr. Fox had looked all about him very sharply, this way and that, he began to creep around this rock and that one, all the time drawing closer to innocent, foolish Little Miss Ptarmigan, whose white dress showed plain as day against the brown earth. And presently he was right behind a big rock she must pass in just another minute. And then he was so close that it seemed almost as if she could hear him breathe.

But she didn't. She just walked along, thinking about the fine things Madam White Owl had said to her, till zing! something sprang at her. She gave a frightened scream and flew to one side, but she was too late. Something sharp and cruel closed down on the toe of her pink shoes. It was the teeth of Mr. Black Fox's sausage grinder. But he closed them down a little too hard, for it cut the toe right off the pink shoe, and the tips of Little Miss Ptarmigan's pink toes besides, and away she flew, screaming with pain, toward a white snow bank in the valley. There each little hurt toe left a red spot on the white snow, and my, how they did ache!

One day quite a while later, when Little White Fox was over among the brown rocks at the foot of Saw Tooth Mountain, he heard a scratch, scratch! among the dry grasses behind him. He turned around, and there stood a little stranger dressed all in brown. She looked wonderfully like Miss Ptarmigan. She was just about the same size, and her shoes and stockings were just the same shade of pink.

"Hello, Little White Fox!" she cried. "I thought you said you could find me when summer came and the ground was all brown. You have been looking for me a whole week, and I have been out here all the time. You saw me yesterday, but you didn't know me, because I had put on my summer clothes. Oh, Little White Fox, you are a very wise fellow! A very wise fellow, indeed!"

It was Miss Ptarmigan. She had changed her white gown for a brown one!

CHAPTER III

HE GETS HIS HEAD THUMPED

"WHO put all those rocks there, I wonder?" mused Little White Fox, scratching his head and looking puzzled. "They are white and all the same size. How queer!"

Little White Fox had climbed almost to the top of Cape Prince of Wales Mountain. He had crept around among the rocks until he was way out on a ledge looking out over the great blue sea. And here he had found these strange rocks, all gathered in one little pile by themselves. As he looked around, he presently saw more piles here and there, and all just the same size. "Now, what do you think of that!" he said to himself, scratching his head again, and more puzzled than ever.

He was still rubbing his head thoughtfully, when a sound behind him made him look around, and his bright eyes fell on a group of the strangest little people any small fox ever came across. There were seven of them. They all stood in a row, and each was as straight up and down as the big whalebone over the grave Omnok, the hunter, had made for his father. Little White Fox had seen some of these strange folks when he was with his mother a few days before. She had told him that they belonged to the Sea Parrot family. "There is a very large family of them," she had said. "They live almost anywhere on the ocean most of the year, but they make Alaska their summer home."

These seven little black sea parrots all stood up stiffly in a row, and not one word did they say, either to Little White Fox or to one another. But Little White Fox felt that they were looking at him, and he didn't like it a bit. "What business is it of theirs if I walk around here and see what I can see?" he thought to himself. "They are very ugly little people, anyway. Look at their faces! They are nearly all nose! And such ugly, bent noses I never saw before in all my life, either!"

Just then a strange, pleasing smell came to Little White Fox's quivering nostrils. Could it come from those strange, round rocks? He would see. He walked up to one of the piles, and, putting his nose down close, gave a big, long sniff. Yes, sir, that's just where it did come from! "How queer!" thought he. "I never saw such rocks before. Guess I'll push one of them around and see what will happen." At that, he stretched out one of his front paws, and began to roll one of the rocks about. Bing! something struck him an awful blow right on the top of his head.

"Ouch! What was that!" cried Little White Fox, peering about and rubbing his head.

The seven strangers were standing still stiff in a straight row. Not a word did they say, but they **had** moved quite a bit closer to Little White Fox.

"I wonder," said Little White Fox. Then he began to roll the rock again. Bing! something struck his head, harder than before. Little White Fox whirled about quickly this time. One of the strangers was straightening up.

"What has she been doing?" he said to himself. "I shouldn't wonder if she had been hitting me with her ugly face. I have a great mind to bite her! What business is it of hers if I come up here and roll these little stones around? Don't all the stones in the world belong to anybody who wants them?"

He gave the rock a vigorous push this time. It rolled over a small ledge, gave a little squash! and broke in two in the middle. Little White Fox could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the inside of the stone spread out on the ground, all yellow and white! And *Ah-ne-ca!* how strong it smelled! But the smell was the most delicious that Little White Fox had ever sniffed.

"I'll just taste some of that good smelling stuff," said Little White Fox happily, and was about to poke his small nose right into it, when ouch! something hit him a terrible whack right on the top of his head. My, how it hurt! It made his head ache so he could hardly think straight. And this time he knew who had done it. It was one of those ugly Parrot people.

"Now, I *will* bite her!" cried Little White Fox, and straight at that stiff row he dashed. And then at last the strangers found their tongues. Such a screaming and chattering Little White Fox had never heard before. But he found he couldn't bite them, after all, for every time he jumped at one of them, she leaped right over his head and hit him with her ugly face. So by and by Little White Fox was glad to run away home and leave the strange rocks to the ugly little people who were so savage and so bold.

Mother White Fox laughed and laughed when she heard of her son's strange adventure.

"But, mother," said Little White Fox, looking very much puzzled. "What did they care about those old rocks?"

"Care, child!" cried his mother, holding her sides. "those things were not rocks: they were their eggs. And the ledge you were on was their home. By and by those eggs will turn into little Sea Parrots, and when their wings and feet are strong, the babies will go swimming and flying out over the shining sea."

Little White Fox was far too young to understand all this, but he could understand how his head had been thumped. So you may be sure it was a long, long time before he went back to that cliff. When he did so, the Sea Parrots were all gone, and so were the strange things he had thought were rocks.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN LITTLE FOXES QUARREL

THERE apparently were more little Foxes together on the tundra that afternoon than there ever had been before. Little White Fox had just come around a bunch of muckluck grass and spied them, all very much interested in something they had found.

"Ha! Ha!" chuckled Little White Fox to himself. "They'll get their heads pecked good and hard pretty soon!" For those little Foxes there on the tundra had found some of those same round objects that Little White Fox had thought were stones and later learned were eggs. The only difference was that these were much larger and were out on the tundra near one of the salt ponds.

The young Foxes had been playing happily together when they found the eggs. There were the Silver Fox twins, the Black Fox triplets, Reynard Red Fox, Violet Blue Fox, and Baby Cross Fox. Rather a large gathering of Foxes, I admit, but there are more of the Fox family in Alaska than in any other part of the world.

Little White Fox slipped behind the muckluck grass and listened. His relatives were quarrelling over who should have the extra egg. You see here were eight little Foxes and nine eggs, so the question was who should take the extra egg?

"We should have the egg," said the Silver Fox twins boastfully, "because we belong to the most aristocratic branch of the family. Our mother's coat alone is worth three hundred dollars."

"You have no more right to hold up your heads than we have," one of the Black Fox triplets answered him. "Our mother's coat is worth quite as much as any Silver Fox's that ever lived."

"Fie! Fie! you are both wrong," reproved Reynard Red Fox. "The best known should always be considered first. Now my father is known all over the world. Whole books have been written about our family."

"I should have it, because I am a baby," wailed Baby Cross Fox.

"I'd like to see any of you get it," cried Violet Blue Fox, seizing the egg and attempting to carry it away. But the greedy miss, while trying to carry it, let go of the one she already had, so she was not a whit ahead.

The fact of the matter was that one of those eggs was all any little Fox could carry, and it certainly was all he could possibly eat. But of course not one of them had thought about that.

Now Little White Fox had lain hid behind the muckluck grass nearly splitting himself with laughter at the thought of the whacking their heads were going to get after awhile. But when he had waited a long time and no one had come to molest his cousins, he began to want one of those eggs for himself. It happened that this was the nest of Old Mrs. Long Neck, the widgeon duck. And Omnok, the hunter, had captured her two days before, so she would never come back to protect her eggs.

Little White Fox stood it as long as he could, and then he came marching boldly out from his hiding place.

"If you don't mind," he said very importantly, "I'll take the extra egg, and that will settle the difficulty."

But that only started the discussion going faster than ever. "You didn't!" "I did!" "You can't!" "I can!" "I will!" "You won't!" and so on and so on they went. Probably they would be quarrelling yet, if Little White Fox had not caught sight of a very tall person coming through the muckluck grass. It was the dreadful Omnok, the hunter!

"Look out!" he cried.

But he was too late. Bang! went the hunter's terrible gun, and a hot bullet whizzed by his ear. The Foxes scattered in every direction, Little White Fox making for his home as fast as his legs would carry him. And his heart beat so fast that even when he had been for half an hour safe under the big flat rock, his breath still came pantingly.

"*Ah-ne-ca!*" cried Omnok, out on the tundra. "What did I shoot at them for? Their coats are not worth a penny till old winter gets at them and makes them thick and strong. My, but they were a fine bunch! If I can catch half of them next winter, I can buy a whole herd of reindeer and become a reindeer man. But what have we here? Ho-ho! So this is what they were making such a fuss about! Old Long Neck's nest! Well, I guess nine good eggs will be fine eating for my wife and the children."

With that Omnok put the eggs in his hunting sack and went stalking away.

CHAPTER V

LITTLE WHITE FOX MEETS BARRED SEAL

LITTLE WHITE FOX was running all over the ice that covered the ocean. It was spring, and the sun was shining its best all the time, but there was plenty of ice left. When there is two miles of ice out on the sand bar, and it is all six feet thick, you may easily guess it takes the sun a long time to loosen it up.

Well, Little White Fox was skipping about here and there to see what he could see, and was not paying much attention where he was going when, *Ah-ne-ca!* down he went! Down! Down! and splash! right into the icy water! My! he was frightened! How was he ever to get out of that place? Six feet of ice wall, straight as the sides of a house, was all about him. But what was this he saw on one side. It seemed to be a sort of little shelf. And, yes sir! as Little White Fox swam over to that side and began to climb up, his feet caught on a ledge, and before he knew it he was sitting in as neat a little room as you ever saw, and all made out of ice! walls, floor, and ceiling!

"Now I wonder who lives here," said Little White Fox to himself. "Whoever it is, I suppose I shall have a great quarrel with him when he comes home."

But no one came, and very soon his coat was quite dry and he found himself very comfortable in this strange little ice palace. But how was he ever to get out and go back to his mother and friends?

Just when he was thinking about that, he saw the water get black all at once, and in another moment he was looking right into the face of a stranger who had popped up out of the water, as if by magic.

"Who are you?" asked Little White Fox, shaking all over with fright.

"I have many names." The stranger grinned so broadly Little White Fox quite lost his fear at once. "Some call me Barred Seal," the stranger continued, "and some call me Ring Seal. Others call me Rainbow Seal, and still others call me Northern Lights. You may call me what you like. But say, there's room for us both up there, isn't there? I am tired!"

"But," said Little White Fox, when they were both comfortably seated, "you look very much like Little Brown Seal."

"Yes," said the other, "he is my cousin, so is Spotted Seal and Oogrook, the big seal, and Little Light Brown Seal, and goodness knows how many more! We are a large family. I am told that we have cousins living down in the Aleutian Islands who are very aristocratic indeed. They go by the name of Hair Seal. Why, their coats, I am

told, are so valuable that Omnok, the hunter, would risk his life to get one of them! For my part, I prefer this simple coat which no man would steal, unless he needed it to make a pair of boots. But you must be hungry, and so am I. Just wait a minute."

Master Barred Seal disappeared in the water, reappearing from time to time with a fish in his mouth.

"Now," he said, when he had finished fishing, "we will have dinner." Before Little White Fox was spread the most tempting array of fish he had ever seen.

"This is the finest home in the world," said Barred Seal proudly. "Your dinner comes right to your front door. Look!"

Little White Fox looked, and sure enough, there in the water were plenty more fish swimming round and round.

"But what if Omnok, the hunter, should find us here?" Little White Fox shivered suddenly.



"Now," he said, when he had finished fishing, "we will have dinner."

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"What if he should?" repeated the other. "There are four feet of solid ice between us and the top. He will not come down in the water to get us, so what could he do?"

"But very soon, Mother tells me," said Little White Fox, "the ice will all melt, or the wind will blow it out to sea."

"Oh, well, in that case," replied Barred Seal, smiling, "there is still the wild, free ocean to live in as always."

"Not for me!" said Little White Fox, turning white in the face and losing his appetite all at once. "How can I get out of here?"

"You don't want to go so soon," answered Barred Seal. "Stay with me awhile. I rather like you. And, as you see, we have plenty of good fish to eat."

"I thank you," said Little White Fox very politely, "but I'd very much rather go back home." And at that moment he had a frightful vision of all that ice going out, out to sea.

"Very well," said Barred Seal. "I'll go in the water and stand on my tail; then you can climb out on my back. Only don't dig in your toe nails."

In another moment Little White Fox was out in the bright sunshine, and you may be very sure he was glad to be there. "I guess the world was made about right," he said to himself. "And I am glad the hills, the tundra, and my own little home are just as they are, and I am glad I am Little White Fox."

CHAPTER VI

LITTLE WHITE FOX HELPS HIMSELF

LITTLE WHITE FOX was hungry again, and it was the hard, cold, winter time, when all of the little folks of the tundra have to hunt far and wide for food. He had asked Tdariuk, the reindeer, to invite him out to dinner. Tdariuk was very nice about it, but said he had only some lichens, which men call reindeer moss, to eat. When Little White Fox tasted them, he said they were not one bit good. The truth is they are very bitter, and taste good only to Reindeer and Caribou folks.

So Little White Fox went scratching away over the tundra and hillsides to see what he could find. He was half way up the side of Cape Prince of Wales Mountain when he came on the tracks of a stranger. "He must have come down from the higher mountains," said Little White Fox to himself. "I wonder who he is. I don't believe he is any bigger than I am, for his tracks are very close together."

He followed the tracks, very curious to know who this newcomer might be. Pretty soon he came to a tunnel right into the snow. There were several tracks in and out of this, so he could not tell whether the stranger were at home or not. Little White Fox knew now that the other fellow was not so large as he, for the tunnel was almost too small for him to enter. But he gathered his coat close around him and crowded in. He rather hoped that he would not find the stranger at home, but that the table would be set for dinner.

And that was just the way it was! Little White Fox knocked at the door, and when no one answered, he walked right in. No,—the table wasn't set, but in the storeroom there was plenty of food. Little White Fox did not make the least fuss but set the table himself.

Now you might think that Little White Fox would eat only fresh eggs and fish, but if you think so you are mistaken. He likes berries and roots, and that is just what he had to eat that day,—blueberries from the hillsides and nice juicy roots and bulbs from the tundra! My, they tasted good!

He had just finished eating when something disturbed him. He had been listening to the noise the wind made blowing across the entrance to the tunnel. Now the wind didn't make any more noise,—not so he could hear it, anyway. That meant that some one had entered the tunnel.

Now Little White Fox was not wishing to see any one just then. "Guess I'd better find the other door to this house and go home," he said to himself. But there wasn't any other door. Little White Fox wasn't afraid, but then,—he just humped himself all up in a corner and wished he didn't have to meet the stranger, that was all.

Well, sir! he had to laugh when he saw the stranger come in at the door. He was the oddest little fellow you ever saw! He looked just like Thunder, the big white rabbit, only his ears were short, his coat was yellow, and he was ever so much smaller. Little White Fox knew who he was right away, for he had heard his mother speak of the Lemming family. And this was one of the Lemmings! There could be no doubt of it. And the Lemmings are great fighters, if they happen to be in the mood for it. Why, they have been known to jump right into the ocean and try to swim across it.

"Now I wonder what I'd better do," thought Little White Fox to himself. But just because he couldn't think of anything at all to do, he did nothing. And that was the very wisest way to behave just then. All bunched up the way he was, he looked very large and strong. The longer Mr. Lemming looked at him, the more sure he became that Little White Fox was some relation of his. And we must be very kind to all our relatives, especially when they are bigger than we are!

Mr. Lemming moved over to one side of the room as if to say, "You may go out if you like."

Little White Fox moved half way to the door and then stopped, which meant, "I'd like you to move a little farther away."

Mr. Lemming went back to the other side.

Little White Fox went to the door, but even then he did not go out, not right away, he didn't. He turned and looked at Mr. Lemming, which meant, "You won't bite my heels, will you?"

Mr. Lemming didn't make a move.

Little White Fox put his head out of the door. Then you should have seen him get out of that tunnel! I don't believe Little White Fox ever went faster in the world. When he was out on the snow, he looked around and felt foolish, for Mr. Lemming was not coming after him at all.

That night Mr. Lemming closed up the tunnel to his house and made a new one under a rock, where he thought Little White Fox would not be able to find it.

Of course Little White Fox should have waited until Mr. Lemming came home, and then asked him for something to eat. But, you know, he was very hungry, and besides he was only a little white fox, after all.

CHAPTER VII

LITTLE WHITE BEAR AND LITTLE BLACK BEAR

LITTLE WHITE BEAR stepped out from behind a great boulder that was black as black could be against the whitest of all white worlds. And my! It was a lonesome world! His mother had left him alone, years and years ago, it seemed to him, to find something to eat. At last he was so lonesome he just had to get out into the sunshine and see if there was any one in all the wide, white world who would play with a little white bear.

"I wonder! I do wonder if there is any one!" he said to himself.

"Chee! Chee!" said a very small voice right close to him. He looked and looked, and at last he spied Little Snow Bunting balancing herself on a salmon-berry bush.

"What does she mean by that?" thought Little White Bear. "Does she want to play with me?" But when he came closer to her, she said "Chee! Chee!" so loudly and saucily he felt almost sure she didn't, and when she spread her snowy wings and flew far, far away, he was quite sure she didn't.

"My! What a world!" said Little White Bear. "I wonder—" But just then he heard a strange sound,—crack—crack—crackety, crackety, crack! What could it be? In just a moment Tdariuk, the reindeer, came trotting around the point, and Little White Bear knew it was Tdariuk's heels he had heard cracking. But Tdariuk didn't give him time to say a word. He just caught one whiff of bear smell, and away he went faster than ever,—crack—crack—crackety, crackety, crackety! Crack! Crack!

Down by the ocean things were no better. When Little Brown Seal saw him coming, he tumbled right into the ocean without so much as saying "How do you do."

Little White Bear looked this way and that, and suddenly he spied some little black things going up and down, up and down, over a little snow hill. Sometimes there were four, sometimes three, sometimes two, and sometimes none at all. "Must be Jim Raven and his crowd," said Little White Bear. "Well, *they* won't get away from me! I'll just slip up to that little hill and then jump right over it so quick they won't have time to fly away!" He slipped up very quietly. Oh! just as quietly as any little bear could. He crept round this little hill and that little salmon-berry bush until he was right under the snow hill. "Now," he said to himself. "Now's the time!" He

couldn't see the black things going up and down, but he knew they were there, so he gave one big, big spring and then, "Oh! Oh! Ow! Wow! E-e-e! Let me go!" he cried, and bounded away as fast as he could. What could have scratched him so? Where had Jim Raven and his crowd gone? Pretty soon he looked around, and right there in the snow where he had jumped was a little bear just about his own size and a great deal like him, but black as black could be!



Little White Bear knew right away what he had done. *Page 52*

"What'd you jump on my stomach for?" said the stranger. Then Little White Bear knew right away what he had done. The black things he thought were Jim Raven and his crowd were not those people at all, but they were Little Black Bear's feet sticking up over the hill, as he rolled around on the snow, having a frolic all by himself.

"Well," said Little White Bear, "where did you come from?"

"Oh! My home is just a little way up in the hills," said Little Black Bear politely. "We have a great many cousins in this cold country: there is Little Brown Bear and Big Barren Ground Grizzly Bear, and I don't know how many more, but we seldom get to see any of our white cousins. How are you? I am glad to see you."

"I think I shall be very fine when I get over my scratches," smiled Little White Bear. "You must have very sharp claws."

"They are quite sharp," said Little Black Bear slowly. "I am sorry I scratched you. Let's find something to play, and you will forget all about it."

"All right!" said Little White Bear gleefully, and away they went, looking for some adventure in the great, white world.

CHAPTER VIII

TROUBLE FOR LITTLE WHITE BEAR

"COME on," cried Little White Bear, almost standing on his head in his eagerness to be at play with this new friend.

"Let's go exploring," said Little Black Bear. "That's the most fun of all!"

"All right," shouted Little White Bear, turning a handspring. And away they went,—two little bears out to see what they could find in the great, white world.

They went down by the lakes and saw where Widgeon had made her nests in the warm summer time; they wandered over the hills and said "Woof Woof!" in the doorway to Little Mrs. White Fox's home; they went here and there, but at last they came upon something really very strange.

"What can it be?" said Little White Bear, standing on one foot and looking very wise.

"What *can* it be!" said Little Black Bear, scratching his head. And what indeed could it be? It was right down at the foot of the mountain. There was a big, black, square thing right in the snow, and in the middle of that there was another little square that was brown. Did any one in the wide world ever hear of finding such a strange thing in a great white wilderness? There wasn't a square thing anywhere else on the whole tundra. Things were round and crooked and made of little angles, but who ever saw a square thing in real tundra land?

The two little Bears walked round and round it and tried to think what it could be. At last Little Black Bear put one foot on it very timidly. "There!" he said bravely. "I stepped on it! Do you dare?"

"Of course I do!" said Little White Bear, walking right out on the big square. "See me!" he shouted and went racing right across the thing. That is, he started across, but just when he was on the little brown square, he felt his feet begin to sink. There was a rip—ripping of something, and down he went, till he struck kerwhack! on something far below. He jumped to his feet very quickly. Where was he? There were brown walls all about him, like the walls of the cave where his home was. And look as he might, Little White Bear could see no way to get out except to climb back up through the hole he had made when he fell in. And that was far, far above his head. He could never get out that way. And what was worst of all, as he began to look around, he was more and more sure of one dreadful thing. And that was that he was in the house of Omnok the hunter. My! That was a terrible thought. But it was true! They had been playing on Omnok's roof, and Little White Bear had fallen right through the window in the roof. Omnok had made a curtain out of the coats of many eider ducks, and this was the brown square that Little White Bear had started to run across.

Well, there wasn't a thing he could do. He just wandered round and round, but he couldn't find the least little place where he could get out. "What a strange place to live!" he thought to himself. "How does he ever get into it himself?"

But Little White Bear wasn't the least bit doubtful that Omnok would be able to get into his house when he came home. And you may be very sure he wasn't a bit happy. He just went way over in the corner under Omnok's bed and sucked his thumb while he wished he was at home in his own dear cave. All of a sudden he heard a noise. Omnok was coming! Little White Bear heard his voice, very big and very angry, outside! "Who has stolen my 'pooksack'?" Omnok growled. "Who has broken my window?"

How poor Little White Bear trembled. He crouched down under the bed just as far as he could. Now he could hear Omnok come closer to his house. And then he saw Omnok's face at the side of the wall. Ah! Yes! There was a little curtain there! Why had he not seen it! But suddenly a happy thought came to Little White Bear. Just when Omnok was standing up, with his terrible gun in his hand, Little White Bear rushed right at him and tumbled against his feet so hard that Omnok went sprawling to the floor, and his terrible gun went clattering after.

Little White Bear bounded out of the little door. But there was just a little alley and then another room with a window high up in the wall. He looked quickly, and saw a little shelf, like Omnok's bed, only higher up, right under the window! Little White Bear jumped up but tumbled back. He tried it again and fell back. But the third time

he found himself on the shelf, and in another minute he was out in the fine old world, running as fast as ever he could for home. And you may be very sure he was glad to be with his mother safe in their cave that night.

CHAPTER IX

LITTLE BLACK BEAR'S DISCOVERY

WHAT was Little Black Bear doing all the time Little White Bear was down in Omnok's house, and what about Omnok's "pooksack"? Well, Little Black Bear looked down into Omnok's house and wished his little playmate would hurry out, so they could discover some more things. But when he had waited what seemed a long, long time, he went on a little exploring trip all by himself. And he discovered something right away. It had four legs like Tdariuk, the reindeer. But it was ever so much larger than Tdariuk, and its legs were straighter. Little Black Bear wasn't long in finding out that this was not really any one at all, but just a rack Omnok had made on which to keep his meat. And there was meat up there! Oh! strips and strips of it! But it was all high out of reach. Little Black Bear sniffed and sniffed, and My! It did smell good! But even when he stood on his tiptoes he couldn't reach the least little mouthful. There was one thing closer to the ground. And such a strange thing as it was! It looked like a coat that had belonged to one of Little Brown Seal's cousins, but he couldn't be in the coat right then, for the collar was tied up tight as could be, and so were the sleeves.

"If there was any one in that coat, he would smother right away," said Little Black Bear, scratching his head. "But there is something in it! See how its sides bulge out! I'll just give it a good poke and see what happens."

Now that strange thing was just hung up by one string, and it swung about very easily. When Little Black Bear gave it a great poke, it went up in the air quickly! It came down quickly too, and it hit Little Black Bear square on his nose. He spun about and tumbled down in the snow, and at first he had a notion to be angry.

When the thing had stopped swinging, he stood on his tiptoes and smelled of it. "E-ee-ee! How good it smells," he cried. "I just believe that is Omnok's 'pooksack' of seal oil which mother has been talking about!" Little Black Bear's mouth began to water and water, for his mother had told him there was nothing half so good in the world as fine, rich seal oil.

Now how was Little Black Bear going to get that oil out of that "pooksack"? He thought and thought and thought. At last he remembered the sleeves which were tied up. They were tied way down at the ends, and there must be seal oil right down to the very tips. His mouth was too small to bite the "pooksack", but one of these sleeves,—that was the very thing! He would bite one of those, hard! with his sharp teeth, and the oil would come right out into his mouth!

He had to stand on his tiptoes to reach, but at last he set his teeth hard and *Ah-ne-ca!* How good that seal oil did taste! It went gurgle, gurgle, right down his throat so fast he could hardly get time to swallow.

But very soon he began to feel as if he had had quite enough. How was he going to stop the seal oil from coming out? Well, he couldn't do that. He would just have to open his mouth and dodge right out of the way quick. "That will be easy," he thought to himself. Anyway, he took two or three more swallows, then he opened his mouth wide, and *Ah-ne-ca!* before he could move one bit, that seal oil shot him right in the eyes and ears and began to run down his back so fast he couldn't even give one grunt. You should have seen that little bear! He was oil from head to foot! And as for his fine, silky, glossy, black coat, he was just sure it was ruined! He didn't stop a minute to see if Little White Bear was out of Omnok's house, but ran home as fast as ever he could.

"Why! Why!" cried his mother, as he came into the house. "Where have you been?"

Little Black Bear couldn't say a word. He just crawled over in one corner and looked down at his toes.

And was his coat really ruined? Ask puss if her coat is ruined some day when she comes in out of the rain, and see what she will say. Mother Black Bear cleaned that coat up that very night so it looked better then new, but how she did it I wouldn't pretend to say.

CHAPTER X

FUN FOR TWO LITTLE BEARS

LITTLE WHITE BEAR and Little Black Bear met at the snow hill next day, but Little White Bear didn't jump into Little Black Bear's sharp claws, and you may be very, very sure they didn't go exploring around Omnok's house! They did go way, way out on the white roof of the ocean. There were splendid hills of ice to hide behind, and everywhere were great ice boulders over which they could play leap-frog.

Little White Bear had just started to leap over one fine, large boulder, and Little Black Bear was coming right after him, when all of a sudden Little White Bear turned a backward somersault and tumbled right into Little Black Bear.

"Wow!" howled Little Black Bear. "What's the matter?"

"Shish!" whispered Little White Bear. "I saw something!"

"On the ice?" asked Little Black Bear, beginning to be frightened.

"Right out there a little bit farther," whispered Little White Bear. "And it was the biggest thing! Oh! My! I can't tell how big it was!" Then Little Black Bear was frightened! What could it be, way out here on the ice, miles and miles from shore? Little White Bear hadn't seen it move, but how could it get way out here if it weren't alive? Trees and things like that couldn't grow on the roof of the ocean.

They lay crouched down behind that big ice boulder until Little White Bear's foot had gone to sleep, and Little Black Bear was catching cold from sitting on the ice.

"I am going to peek round and see if it has moved," said Little White Bear bravely. He looked, and it hadn't moved one little bit, so it seemed as if it couldn't really be alive! Perhaps it was something that Omnok had left there. They crept up toward it, little by little, until they were right up to it, and what do you think? It was nothing but Omnok's big whaling boat he had left on the ice.

They looked all around to see if Omnok were about, then they tumbled right into that boat for a frolic. There were a great many things in the boat, but the most interesting of all was a great, long "pooksack." It wasn't full of seal oil. If it had been, I am quite sure Little Black Bear would have had nothing to do with it. It was just full of air. Omnok had used it for a sled when he drew his boat over the roof of the ocean. And what a splendid football it did make, and how they did knock it about! First Little White Bear would give it a boost with his big, clumsy paws, then Little Black Bear would boost it right over Little White Bear's head! Then there would be a scramble to see who would get to it first. But one time Little Black Bear kicked it right over Little White Bear's head so high that it tumbled off the roof of the ocean and down into the great dark sea. And Little White Bear tumbled right into the ocean after it! Yes, sir! Right into the water, and you never saw water so cold in all your life! Little White Bear didn't scramble out as fast as ever he could! He just climbed up on that "pooksack", happy as a clam, and wanted Little Black Bear to come in too! Little Black Bear, however, had a notion that the water was cold, so he touched it with his toe and "Um-m-m! Um-m-m!" he didn't want any swim that day. But Little White

Bear wouldn't come out of the water and play, so all Little Black Bear could do was to skip along home and tell his mother that he was quite sure that Little White Bear would freeze to death that very night.

"Oh, no!" said Madam Black Bear, looking very wise. "Little White Bear won't freeze to death."

"Why," said Little Black Bear, opening his eyes wide. "I'm sure I'd freeze right away."

"So you would," said his mother. "You were a wise young fellow to try the water before you ventured in. But Little White Bear is quite different. He has a very warm coat and is very fat. He is used to the cold water and will live in it all winter. But just you wait," she added, with a sly wink. "You will have a surprise for him some day! When he comes to look for you some cold, cold time, won't he be surprised to find you snugly tucked away in bed and sleeping all day and all night? Won't he, though?"

Madam Black Bear laughed a big bear laugh, and Little Black Bear laughed a little bear laugh, so together they were after all two of the happiest bears in all the world.

When Omnok went out on the roof of the sea to get his big boat, he saw what Little White Bear and Little Black Bear had done. He was very angry when he saw that his "pooksack" was gone. He thought Big White Bear had been there.

"I'll go hunting for him to-morrow morning," he said to himself. "And I'll take Huskie, my Malemute dog, along!"

CHAPTER XI

BIG WHITE BEAR MEETS HUSKIE

"Now, I'll tell you," Omnok said to Huskie. "Big White Bear is a great big bully. He likes to fight all the little folks of the tundra and sea because he is so big. It would be a good thing if we could show him that he isn't so awfully big, after all. Wouldn't it?"

"Ki, yi, yi," said Huskie, which meant he thought it would.

"Well, then, this is what you must do. Go running about on the ocean ice everywhere and hunt for him. I will be hunting too. If you find him first, run away, then call me. I will shoot him. Do you see?"

"Ki, yi, yi," answered Huskie again, meaning this time, "I do."

Huskie ran up and down, in and out among the ice piles, until his feet were sore. He was very anxious to find Big White Bear. Whenever a little fellow has a chance to harm a big fellow he thinks is a bully, he always wants to do it. Did you ever notice that?

So Huskie ran on and on, even if his feet were sore.

"Hello!" He had just gone around something he thought was an ice pile when he heard a voice.

Looking up, he saw the face of Big White Bear. What he was going around wasn't ice at all. It was Big White Bear. And, my! What a monster he was! Huskie had to look away off at Cape Prince of Wales Mountain and look again at Big White Bear before he could tell which was the larger, bear or mountain.

He wanted to run away. But Big White Bear was so very near he didn't dare to, so he just said "Hello!" But to himself he said, "Big White Bear is a big, big bully, just as Omnok said. I am glad he is going to get killed."

"Who are you?" asked Big White Bear.

"I'm Huskie, the Malamute dog. Who are you?"

"I am a Polar Bear. Where did you come from?"

"My home's over there on the shore," said Huskie, pointing his nose toward shore. "Where'd you come from?"

"I came from far, far North. I've never been here before. Didn't mean to come this time. Last night I went to sleep on a corner of Old Ocean's blanket. Old Ocean put up his knee in his sleep, and my corner of the blanket slid right down here. What do you think about that?"

"Very strange."

Now Huskie is a great fighter himself, for a little fellow. And great fighters like fight stories. He was just itching to know all about Big White Bear's big fights.

"Who'd you kill last?" he asked.

"Who did I kill?" said Big White Bear, opening his eyes very wide.

"Yes, was it a very bad fight?"

"A bad fight?"

"Yes, you don't seem much scratched up for a great fighter. Look at me: one leg bent, nose split, and scarred up all over," said Huskie proudly.

"Do you think I'm a great fighter?"

"Of course you are. Omnok says—" Huskie caught himself just in time. If Big White Bear knew all about Omnok, he'd run away.

"Why, I never fight anybody," said Big White Bear gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Huskie. "That's a good story. You never fight any one. What a fib!"

"It's the truth."

"The truth? Ha! Ha! Of course that's not true. You're a bear. All bears are fighters, and great big bullies, besides! Why! I bet you've got claws three inches long."

"You think so?" Big White Bear put out his front paw which was as big as the trunk of a small tree. Huskie dodged.

"Look," said Big White Bear.

Huskie looked at Big White Bear's claws. They were not as long as his own. They were broad and blunt, just sharp enough for climbing over the ice.

"I don't know why they name me Bear," said Big White Bear. "Old Buster Grizzly, Buster Brown, and Buster Black, now, are very distant relatives of mine. Indeed, they have long claws and are great fighters. But my nearest relative, Tusks, the Walrus, is no fighter at all, and believe me, neither am I."

But Huskie was a very quarrelsome and suspicious fellow.

"That will do to tell," said he; "but I know it is not true. As for those claws of yours, I can guess how that is. They look very harmless now. But when you want to fight, you run them out like a cat's."

"It's no such thing," said Big White Bear.

"Oh, yes, it is. Omnok says it is. I am going to tell him now, and he'll fix you!" Vain boast! Huskie had forgotten himself.

In another instant, before he could dodge, Big White Bear had grabbed him and hugged him tight. Huskie could not call out at all. His voice became the tiniest little squeak.

"Let me go! Let me go!" he squeaked. "I won't tell! I won't tell! Oh! Oh! Please, Mr. Bear, let me go!"

But Big White Bear only grinned, and said "Huh?"

"Oh, I'll not kill you," said Big White Bear finally. "It's just as I have told you. I am no fighter. I never hurt anybody, unless I am driven to do so. I'll not kill you, but I am going to make your teeth chatter so you can't call your master."



"I am going to make your teeth chatter so you can't call your master."

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At that, Big White Bear dropped right down into the cold, cold water with Huskie in his arms.

Now Big White Bear lives half the time in water, and he does not mind it a bit. But poor Huskie! When Big White Bear put him back on the ice, he couldn't have said a word to save his life.

"Now, go and tell your master that you have seen Big White Bear," said Big White Bear, grinning. "But you don't know where he is just now."

Then he dropped into the water and disappeared.

Huskie did not wait to hunt up his master. He ran home as fast as he could go. Try as he might, Omnok has never been able to get him to go hunting for Big White Bear again.

CHAPTER XII

LITTLE WHITE FOX GOES HUNTING

LITTLE WHITE FOX went hunting for Big White Bear! And he didn't have a gun or a spear or a bow and arrow! Now what do you think of that! You see, it was this way. It was winter time, and food was becoming very scarce on the hills and the tundra. All the delicious roots were frozen hard in the earth, and the berries were all gone. Little White Fox was very hungry, and he told Little Mrs. White Fox about it.

"Well," said his mother, "I guess we will have to go and find a Big White Bear."

"Find a Big White Bear!" cried Little White Fox. "Why, he'd eat us!"

"But you mustn't let him do that," said Mrs. White Fox.

"But what do we want to find him for?" said Little White Fox, scratching his head.

"Listen," said Mrs. White Fox very mysteriously. "Big White Bear is a very wasteful fellow. He has a big, big kitchen, and he has the greatest amount of food stored there. Oh! piles and piles of it! He doesn't like to eat his food in his kitchen. He brings some out every day and always leaves plenty. Now, if we can find him, we will just follow him about until his dinner hour. When he is gone, we will have plenty to eat. See?"

Little White Fox did see and, though he was half afraid of Big White Bear, he was also very hungry, and so he was anxious to go on the hunt right away.

"You go one way, and I'll go the other," said Madam White Fox. "When you find Big White Bear, you come right back to this rock. I will come back too, and we will follow him about for weeks and weeks and have plenty to eat."

Away went Little White Fox, looking, looking everywhere for Big White Bear! He looked behind the cliff on the mountain. But Big White Bear wasn't there. He looked on the sand bars, but he wasn't there. He went peering all around the little lakes, but he wasn't there.

And where do you think Big White Bear was? He wasn't in very good business. I assure you. He was over on the other side of the mountain. Tusks the Walrus had just climbed out of the water and had gone to sleep on the beach close to the mountain. Tusks was a great, good natured fellow, with a monstrous, heavy body and a pair of terrible looking tusks, which were not really terrible at all, for Tusks never used them except for digging clams. Big White Bear was up on the rocks, way, way above Tusks, and he had a great rock in his powerful paws, as big a rock as he could lift! He was going to throw it right down on Tusks and kill him. He had plenty to eat at home, but he thought this would be a fine chance to get some fresh meat.

Just when he was getting ready to throw it, something happened. Little White Fox came round the corner of the hill, looking here, there, and everywhere for Big White Bear. He came on round and round till he was just above Big White Bear, and then all at once he saw him! He was so glad he had found Big White Bear, that he stood right up on his two feet and gave one big, big laugh. "Ho! Ho! Ha! Ha! Yak! Yak! Yak!" just like that.

There was never a worse scared bear than Big White Bear in all the world! He had a guilty conscience, for he knew it was not right to throw a rock on poor, tired Tusks, and when he heard Little White Fox laugh, he didn't know who it was. It might be some one very big and dangerous. It might be Omnok, the hunter, with his terrible gun! Big White Bear just trembled and trembled, and the rock fell from his powerful paws and went splashing into the water without hurting Tusks at all. But when he looked around to see who had laughed at him, he couldn't see any one at all. Little White Fox knew a whole lot better than to let Big White Bear see him just then! But

just after that Little White Fox did a very thoughtless thing. He was so hungry and wanted so much to see where Big White Bear had his kitchen, that he forgot all about his mother telling him to come back to the big rock, and away he went, after Big White Bear all by himself.

CHAPTER XIII

BIG WHITE BEAR'S KITCHEN

"I MUSTN'T lose Big White Bear," thought Little White Fox, "and I mustn't let him see me. Oh! My! No! I mustn't do that, for he is a big, big fellow and who knows what he might do to me?" So he slipped along behind very slyly, hiding behind this rock and that one, behind this snow pile and that one, very carefully indeed.

But Big White Bear was nearly as badly frightened as Little White Fox. "What was that great big laugh?" he kept thinking to himself. And every time he thought of it, he looked behind him, and I am sure he really expected to see Omnok, the hunter, step right out with his terrible gun. But by and by, when he had gone down the mountain and across the tundra and over the little lakes, he was not so much afraid, and he began to grow hungry. Now that was just what Little White Fox hoped would happen, for he was very hungry himself and very curious besides to see where Big White Bear kept his pantry. Where would it be? Would it be in the tall mountains, or on the tundra, or out on the roof of the sea? How interesting it would be to know!

Pretty soon Big White Bear began to go straight ahead, without turning to one side or the other. Then Little White Fox was sure he had started for his kitchen, and he was glad as could be! Big White Bear went right out on the roof to the ocean and on and on and on, till Little White Fox was good and tired. When he came to the dark, dark waters of the ocean, Big White Bear didn't stop one moment. He just tumbled right into the water and disappeared all at once!

"My!" said Little White Fox, opening his eyes very wide. "He will surely be drowned." And then all at once he thought of the fine dinner he had been expecting to get and how far it was back to the great rock where his mother was to wait for him. And then, of course, he remembered what his mother had said about coming back to call her. How sorry he was now that he had forgotten all about that. Oh! if they could only find Big White Bear's kitchen! Just then Little White Fox heard a scratching on the ice and bounded behind an ice boulder before he was seen. Big White Bear had come right up out of the ocean with the biggest dinner you have ever seen. His kitchen was right down in the water under the roof of the ocean, and he had brought his dinner out on the ice to eat it in the sunshine.

Little White Fox thought Big White Bear would never, never get through eating, but he finally did. And there was quite a big dinner left for Little White Fox. When Big White Bear was fast asleep on the ice, taking his after-dinner nap, Little White Fox crept up and began to eat his dinner too. "He didn't ask me," said Little White Fox, "but then I didn't give him a chance. I am sure he would if I had." It was a very good dinner and how Little White Fox's sides did stick out when he had finished! But he didn't stay to say thank you, so I guess he wasn't very sure that Big White Bear would have invited him. He just hid behind an ice boulder and waited for Big White Bear to wake up. He mustn't lose Big White Bear. He began to think about that fine dinner he had just eaten and about how he had found Big White Bear all by himself and how he had frightened him. It made him feel so good he just wanted to laugh. The more he thought, the more he wanted to laugh, and the first thing, before he knew it, he was laughing right out loud. "Ha! Ha! Yak! Yak! Yak! Yak!"

Just that minute Big White Bear woke up, and he didn't stop to see who was laughing! He tumbled right into the ocean and went paddling away as fast as ever he could. He didn't stop till he was almost out of sight, then he looked back once for just a moment and went paddling on and on, till he was way out of sight. Little White Fox had lost Big White Bear. All the fine dinners he was to have in the future were lost, just because he had laughed at the wrong time.

I don't know what Little Mrs. White Fox had to say to him when he came home, for I wasn't there, but there are some very fine switches made out of reindeer moss lying all over the tundra. However, Little White Fox was a very young fellow and had a great many things to learn, so perhaps his mother did not punish him very hard.

CHAPTER XIV

BIG WHITE BEAR FINDS LITTLE WHITE FOX

WHEN Omnok returned from hunting Big White Bear he sat down and began to think. "White bears about," he thought to himself. "There must be white foxes about too, for they always stay close to white bears. I must go out and set some traps." And that is just what he did the very next evening. He threw the cruel looking traps, with their ugly steel jaws, over his shoulder and went out to look for a good place to set them. At last he came to a place where there were many white bear tracks. "I guess this will do," he said to himself. He took out his great knife and cut out a cake of snow that was nearly as hard as ice. He cut this up into four little snow boards, very square and very smooth. Then he made a little hole in the snow and put a trap there. Next he made a thin shingle of snow,—so thin that the least touch would break it right in two. He put this over the trap and smoothed it over so carefully that no one in all the world could tell there was a trap hidden there. Then he made a little house over it with the four boards,—a very fine looking house with a roof and three sides, and with one side left open for the door. He put some nice pieces of meat inside of the house, so when any little fox came to live there he wouldn't have to go away hungry. Finally he spilled a few drops of delicious smelling seal oil around the house and went away.

Now who should happen by that way, almost right away, but our own Little White Fox, looking, looking everywhere for Big White Bear. Right away the west wind blew a little whiff of the rich seal oil in front of his nose, and almost before he knew it, Little White Fox was standing in front of the little house that Omnok built, wondering how it came there and how there happened to be such delicious looking meat inside of it. He wasn't quite sure it was safe to go inside, so he just licked up all the drops of seal oil around the outside. It was very good, but it was only a taste, and it made him hungrier than ever.

"I just believe I am going to have that meat!" he said to himself. He was about to put his paw on the little snow shingle that was so thin and would break so easily, when he heard a great, gruff voice right behind him.

"Here! What you doing there?" Little White Fox just tumbled a back somersault away from the little house and ran as fast as ever he could, for there, right behind him, was Big White Bear! It's one thing to be looking for some one very much larger than yourself, but quite another thing for that big person to be looking at you. Little White Fox didn't take any chances. But when he was a long distance away, and Big White Bear wasn't following him, he turned around to see what would happen to the little house. He wished Big White Bear would go away, so he could get all that delicious meat.

But Big White Bear did not go away. He bent his long neck and put his great nose right up to the little house and gave a great "Woof!" The little house was far too small for Big White Bear to enter, so he put out one of his ponderous, powerful paws and sent the little house flying every way. But his ponderous, powerful paw went too deep. It touched the thin shingle, and Snap! the trap came down on Big White Bear's paw. Came down hard too! Ow-e-e-e! How it did hurt! How Big White Bear roared! One might have thought he was being killed! He ran limping to the ocean, dragging the little fox trap after him. When he got there, he stuck his paw up in the air, and moved it round and round, round and round, till the chain on the trap went Ziz! Ziz! Ziz! just like that. All of a sudden the trap came loose and tumbled into the sea, and I think Steadfast Starfish's children are playing with it still.

Little White Fox ran straight home to tell his mother how he had found Big White Bear and all the things that had happened.

"Well," said his mother, "I think Big White Bear has found you, and I am sure it is a good thing he did!" Then she sat down and told Little White Fox all about the dangers of nice smelling meat and the little houses that Omnok builds.

CHAPTER XV

LITTLE WHITE FOX GOES FISHING

LITTLE WHITE FOX was hungry again. It would seem that a little white fox is hungry most of the time. He went wandering all over the tundra, looking for something to eat. At last he came to the bank of the river. He was sniffing about there when he spied a door right in the ground near the ice roof of the river. "Hello!" said he, stopping short. "I wonder who made that door in there." He looked into the door but could see no one. It was too dark. He shouted into the door, but no one answered. He crept part way down the stairway. Then he stopped and listened. He heard nothing, so he ventured on, and almost before he knew it, he found himself in one of the biggest caves he had ever seen. It was as wide as half the river and as long as he could see in each direction. It had an ice roof and a good solid floor. Only the floor stopped pretty soon, and then there was water.

"I don't believe anybody in the world could build a house like this!" said Little White Fox. "I guess it just happened to be here, and some one has discovered it. I wonder who it could be?"

He walked down close to where the water was, and there he found tracks. Oh! hundreds and hundreds of them! But he could not tell whose tracks they were. He had never seen such tracks before.

"Anyway, I believe there is something good to eat in that water," he said to himself. "If there wasn't, that fellow wouldn't come down here and stand around so much. It is nice and warm down here out of the wind, and I guess I'll stand around a little myself and see what will happen."

Meanwhile, down below in the river, two of the little river people were having a talk all by themselves. They were Unfortunate Flounder and Mr. Salmon Trout. Salmon Trout is a very graceful fellow who always holds himself erect in the water. When he swims, he goes so swiftly that you can hardly see him. But Unfortunate Flounder goes floating around on one side all the time, and looks more like a dead leaf than any member of the fish family.

"Why do you not stand straight up in the water as I do?" said Salmon Trout.

"Well," said Unfortunate Flounder, "it's only a little my fault. Can't you see that my eyes are on one of my flat sides and my stomach on the other? It wouldn't be very pleasant to go about looking one way and going another, would it? When I was going south, I'd be looking west; don't you see?"

"How does it happen that you are that way?"

"I was born that way. All my children are the same, and so were my parents before me. You see, it's really a matter of ancestry. Way back somewhere, one of my great grandparents found out it was easier to lopp around sideways in the water than to stand straight up as you do, so he lopped around all his life long. His son followed his example and lopped around a little worse. So it went on, until to-day we could not straighten up if we were to try. At least, it would take whole generations before we could balance ourselves as well as you do. As for me, I don't see as it matters much, for, after all, I quite agree with my great grandfather that it is best to be comfortable, even if it does make you ugly, ungraceful, and slow."

But just then Unfortunate Flounder learned what an unhappy thing it was to be slow. Little White Fox from his station on the bank had been watching, watching very

sharply two dark spots that had appeared in the water. He had watched them come closer and closer. At last he thought he could reach out and grab one of them without getting in the water.

"Look out!" cried Salmon Trout, as he glided swiftly away. But poor Unfortunate Flounder was too slow, and he felt Little White Fox's sharp teeth close down on him.

Just then something happened. "Here! what are you doing in my fishing house?" demanded an angry voice. It frightened Little White Fox so badly that he dropped Unfortunate Flounder back into the river and looked around.

It was Mr. Golden Marten, and this was his fishing house. At least, he called it his, for he had made the stairway down to it. It took Little White Fox only a moment to discover that while Golden Marten was not quite as large as he was, his teeth were very sharp. The door to the stairway was quite close to him, and before Golden Marten could stop him Little White Fox was out of the door and racing for home as fast as his little legs could carry him.

"All the same," he said to his mother that night, after he had told her of the cave, "when I am as old as you are, I am going to have a fish house all my own!"

CHAPTER XVI

LITTLE BROWN SEAL'S NARROW ESCAPE

ONE day Little White Fox was out in front of his house sunning himself. He and his mother were living off the bounty of Big White Bear these days, so there was nothing to worry about. He just stretched himself out there on the white snow and looked away at the wide, white world, as contented as could be. But all at once he saw a strange, strange thing. Out on the roof of the silent sea, Little Brown Seal was sunning himself too, right close to the door of his home. He was taking little "cat" naps. You see, Little Brown Seal could not sleep down in his house in the ocean. It was far too damp down there. So he was lying there by his door, sleeping just two or three minutes at a time, then looking up to see if there was any danger near.

Now that wasn't such a strange thing. Little White Fox had seen Little Brown Seal do that nearly every day, but the strange thing was that there was some one else out on the ice who seemed to be doing the very same thing that Little Brown Seal was doing,—taking "cat" naps. And stranger still, he did not seem to be one of Little Brown Seal's relatives! He was too long, and he didn't wiggle his body right!

Little White Fox could see all that, but Little Brown Seal was so low down on the ice that all he could see was the stranger's head. He might have known even then that it was not one of his cousins, if he had had as sharp eyes as Little White Fox. But he didn't, for his eyes were very poor. So Little Brown Seal thought it was one of his own cousins taking a nap now and then, just as he was. Once it looked to Little White Fox as if he were beginning to understand that the stranger was not one of his cousins, for he stayed awake a long, long time and looked and looked and looked. The stranger seemed to be sleeping a long time, and that made Little Brown Seal suspicious. But just then the stranger bobbed his head and looked all around this way and that way, just as any real, wise seal would do, and Little Brown Seal decided it was all right, that this stranger was one of his really truly cousins.

And who do you think the stranger, who acted so very much like a seal, was? It was Omnok, the hunter, with his terrible gun sliding right along beside him! He had learned how Little Brown Seal took his "cat" naps, and he was going to slip right up to him and kill him. He kept creeping up closer, closer, closer. But Little Brown Seal had made up his mind that it was one of his cousins, and so he didn't ask himself any more questions about it. He just kept on taking his little "cat" naps and waking up to

look all around, this way and that way, but never paying any attention to this stranger who was coming nearer all the time.

"My," Little White Fox thought to himself, "he will surely be killed. Yes, sir! I am very, very sure Little Brown Seal is going to be killed!"

But just when Omnok was getting very close, and just before he was going to raise his terrible gun and kill Little Brown Seal, a strange thing happened. I don't know how it happened. Perhaps Little White Fox was sorry the sun was going down so soon that day, or perhaps he was lonesome for his mother. Perhaps he was sorry for Little Brown Seal, because he was going to get killed in just another minute; but whatever it was, Little White Fox began to feel bad all at once. He wanted to cry, and he *did* cry! He lifted his pink little nose into the air and cried, "Ah! Ah! Ah! Yak! Yak! Yak!"

Now Little Brown Seal may not have very good eyes, but he has very good ears, and he had just wakened from a "cat" nap when he heard that lonesome wail from Little White Fox. And he didn't wait one minute, nor one second! He tumbled down into his house in the ocean as quick as a wink, just as Omnok the hunter was getting ready to shoot him!

Perhaps you think Omnok wasn't angry! But he had heard Little White Fox cry. He would get Little White Fox's coat. Then he would be even. But Little White Fox was nowhere about when Omnok climbed the hill. No, you may be sure he wasn't! He was way under the great rock in his own little home, where Omnok couldn't get near him. So all Omnok could do was to put his terrible gun over his shoulder and go back home.

CHAPTER XVII

A STRANGE JOURNEY

LITTLE WHITE FOX went on a strange journey one day, and when he arrived at its end, he didn't know where he was! You see, he had been living for a long time with his mother off the bounty of Big White Bear. Now the snow had almost all gone from the mountains and the tundra. Little Mrs. White Fox had gone over to the land and told Little White Fox to watch sharp and see if Big White Bear came up out of his kitchen and left anything for them to eat. She was going over to see if she could find any perfectly good blueberries which had been hidden all winter under the snow.

Little White Fox loitered about on the roof to the ocean and dreamed, as little folks will in the springtime. The weather was fine, and the sun was shining now, all day and all night. A great deal of the roof to the ocean had floated mysteriously away, one night, but there was a great deal of it left, and Little White Fox felt very safe. But all of a sudden, Scratch! Scratch! he heard Big White Bear come up out of his kitchen. Then he knew that there was going to be a feast, just as there had been so many times before. He waited and waited until Swish, Swish he heard Big White Bear tumble back into the water and swim away. Then such a feast as he did have! Well, Little White Fox ate so much and the sun shone so brightly, that he began to feel very, very sleepy, and almost before he knew anything about it, he was curled up on the roof to the ocean fast asleep, dreaming as hard as ever a white fox dreamed.

I don't know how long Little White Fox slept: hours and hours I imagine. But when he awoke and looked about him, all he could see was the dark, deep ocean everywhere. He jumped to his feet and peered this side of him and that side, but it was all the same dark, deep water. There was nothing but ocean everywhere. The big waves had come along and carried off the part of the roof to the ocean that Little White Fox was sleeping on!

What was Little White Fox to do? He could not swim very far, and it was a long way to land: in fact, he could not see any land at all. Besides, the water was very, very cold. He couldn't think of a thing to do. He just curled up in a heap and shivered and shivered and shivered, he was so lonesome and frightened.

"Hello!" shouted Tusks the Walrus, sticking his head out of the water. He looked and looked. "That's strange," he said to himself. "I thought I saw Little White Fox over here on a piece of the ocean's roof. Guess not, though. I don't see him now." And away he swam for a frolic with one of his cousins.

"Hello!" cried Little Brown Seal, turning a somersault in the water. When he turned the somersault, he looked at the piece of the ocean's roof. "My! My!" he sighed. "These eyes of mine must be getting very bad indeed! I thought I saw Little White Fox on that piece of roof." And he too went paddling away to play.

And all the time Little White Fox was hiding his nose in a little snow bank, and closing his pink eyes because he was so very much afraid of every one, even his best friends, out here on the silent, lonesome sea. Very soon he was nearly frightened to death. Big White Bear popped right up out of the ocean! He climbed up on one end of the piece of roof and tipped it up so Little White Fox thought he would surely be tipped into the sea. But he dug in his toes and hid his nose, and closed his eyes very tight. Pretty soon Big White Bear thought of something he wanted to do and tumbled back into the sea.



Big White Bear popped right up out of the ocean! Page 119

Little White Fox floated on and on, for hours and hours and hours, over the silent sea. But by and by when he was very, very hungry and very sure that he would never see his dear home and his dear mother again, there came a dreadful storm. Little White Fox had to dig his toe nails in tight, again, and once the piece of the roof broke right in two and nearly threw him into the sea! But finally he felt a bump. His piece of roof had struck something hard. Bump! Bump! He nearly stood on his head, and in a minute the piece of roof was perfectly still. Little White Fox looked up, and right by the piece of roof was the finest sandy beach you ever saw. He gave one big run and jumped on the beach, and scampered away, as fast as ever he could, just before a big wave came and carried the piece of roof back to sea.

It wasn't any time at all until he was up on the edge of the finest hill, eating the richest, juiciest blueberries that had ever been kept under a snow bank all the long winter through. And pretty soon he was all dry, and feeling fine and not hungry at all.

"But where in the world am I?" thought Little White Fox, scratching his head. "I'll have to see if I can find some of my friends who can tell me how to go home. It must be a long, long way."

CHAPTER XVIII

LITTLE WHITE FOX COMES HOME

WHEN Little White Fox looked all around him very carefully, this way and that, and didn't see a thing he had ever seen before and not a person who knew him in all this new tundra and all these new hills, he felt very blue, you may be sure. But he didn't cry about it. He was too happy at being off that bit of roof to the great ocean for that. So he looked as far as he could see in every direction, and at last he spied some little lakes way down on the tundra. "I'll just go over there and see if there is any one I know," he said to himself, and went trotting away as fast as ever he could. He came right down by the lakes and at last he saw some one he had met in his own home land. It was Mr. Widgeon Junior, a son of Old Mrs. Widgeon Duck, who was killed by Omnok the hunter.

"Hello," said Little White Fox.

Widgeon Junior looked up quick, in a frightened sort of way, but he never said a word. He just stretched out his long neck and flapped his strong wings and began to fly. And all the time he pointed with his bill straight ahead and with his feet straight behind, as if to say, "Follow me: this is the way home."

"I just believe that *is* the way home!" said Little White Fox. "His mother had her nest right down on our tundra last summer, and I believe he is going there right now!" So he picked up his feet lively and ran along behind Widgeon Junior but he couldn't near keep up! It wasn't any time at all before he was so far behind that he couldn't see Widgeon Junior at all! And before long he was just as badly lost as before. But he trotted on cheerfully. "For," he said to himself, "I'll see some one else I know very soon."

And sure enough, all of a sudden there was a clap, clap of wings, and some one that looked just like Who-Who, the big white owl, went soaring over his head. But when Little White Fox shouted "Hello" in his very best voice, the great white owl never answered a word, but went flapping on till he lit on the top of a whalebone which one of Omnok's relatives had put up to mark a grave.

"Well," said Little White Fox to himself, "I guess that isn't Who-Who, but anyway, it is one of his cousins, and he is very wise. All the Owl folks are. He will tell me the way home."

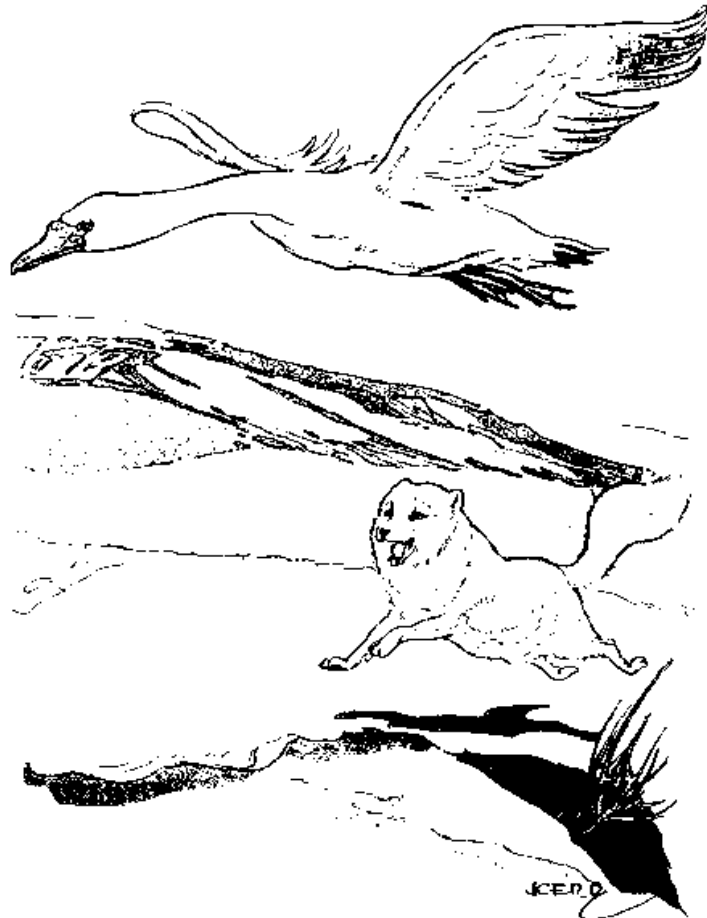
So he hurried over to the foot of the whalebone and said, "Please, Mr. White Owl, won't you tell me the way home?"

The big white owl never answered a word, but he winked his eye very cunningly, as much as to say, "Look, I'll show you." Then he flapped his great, white wings, and away he flew, and away after him, as fast as ever he could trot, came Little White Fox, never once looking this way or that to see where he was going, so proud was he to be able almost to keep up with this new friend. He ran and ran and ran until he was out of breath, when he saw the big, white owl spread his wings out straight and light on a whalebone sticking right out of the ground and looking for all the world like the one he had flown away from just a little while before. Little White Fox ran up to the whalebone and looked up at the big white owl.

The big white owl closed one eye and winked very knowingly as if to say, "Am I not a very wise old owl?"

Little White Fox looked all around at the tundra and the hills, and sure enough, that was the very same whalebone, sticking up out of the ground! The big white owl had led him a long way, all around in a circle! You may be sure Little White Fox was disgusted. He would never ask another thing of a big white owl again, if he lived a thousand years! But away he trotted toward some other little ponds he had seen some time before.

He was slipping along as quietly as he could in the grass when he heard a splash, splash in the water, and there was Mrs. Swan. Of all the people in all the world, besides his own dear mother, Little White Fox liked Mrs. Swan best! Her white gown was always so smooth and tidy, her neck so graceful, and she seemed so kind, that Little White Fox thought she was just the most perfect lady that ever was! To be sure he had been tempted once to steal one of the big eggs out of her great nest, on the beach the summer before, but he hadn't done it, and now, you may be very sure, he was glad he hadn't, for perhaps she would tell him the way home.



She was going back to his own dear beach. Page 126

"Please, Mrs. Swan."

he said, making a very graceful bow. "will you tell me the way home?" Mrs. Swan looked at him very kindly but never said a word. Very soon she flapped her great, white wings, and putting her bill right out before her and her feet straight behind, out she went flapping away to the northward. Then Little White Fox knew that was the way home, for she was going back to his own dear beach to make a new nest and to hatch out some more little Swanfolks.

I wish I had time to tell you of all the adventures that befell Little White Fox on his way home, but I haven't. Perhaps some other time we will hear all about that. But one day, when the sun was shining brightly and the flowers were beginning to bloom, who should little Mrs. White Fox see come trotting up the path by the big rock but her own long-lost son, Little White Fox. And you may well believe that she was glad to see him! She had thought she would never see him again. And the things he had to tell her! How she did listen, and how the other little Foxes, Violet Blue Fox and Little Cross Fox and the Silver Fox twins and all the rest, how they listened! Oh, Little White Fox was quite a person in his family that evening! But when he had been given a good dinner with a piece of blueberry pie such as only Little Mrs. White Fox can make, and had curled himself up on the moss cot by the side of the great rock, he went to sleep thinking that after all there was no place in all the world like his own home under the big rock, and no one in all the world quite so good as his own mother; and he felt very, very sure that he would be careful in the future and not let anything carry him away from her.

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