

Paine Albert Bigelow

The Hollow Tree and Deep Woods Book



Albert Paine

**The Hollow Tree and
Deep Woods Book**

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Paine Albert Bigelow
The Hollow Tree and Deep Woods
Book / being a new edition in one
volume of «The Hollow Tree» and
«In The Deep Woods» with several
new stories and pictures added

TO FRIENDS, OLD AND NEW

I suppose the very best pay that ever comes to anyone who writes a book is to know that the ones he wrote it for really like it. When they like it well enough to write and tell him so, though they have never seen him, and perhaps never will, then he feels very proud indeed, and happy. Perhaps he even looks at himself in the looking-glass to make sure he is really the one who did it, though of course he wouldn't have anyone see him doing it, or think him vain, for anything.

The publisher is only going to let me print one of the ever-so-many nice letters that have come for the man who wrote the Hollow Tree stories and the other man who drew the pictures for them. So I've picked out one that is for both of us, and that is signed by three, which makes it equal to six letters, three for each of us, and as nice letters as anyone who writes books for other folks to read could ever wish to have.

*New York City, 107 Sixty-ninth Street, East,
Oct. 18th, 1900.*

Dear Mr. Paine:

Won't you please write another book about the 'Coon and the 'Possum and the old black Crow? We know these two by heart, now. We like that story about the "Rain In The Night" because that is the way we do when there is a thunderstorm. *Please* write some more and make them friends with poor Mr. Dog, and we want Mr. Condé to draw the pictures, too.

Your sincere friends,

Amy C. Hutton,

Jack Hutton, Jr.,

M. Katherine Hutton.

Don't you think that is a very nice letter to get? I am sure no one could be blamed for taking just one little look in the glass after that, or for trying to "write another book" to please readers who have learned the others "by heart."

But, dear me, it couldn't be done, because you see there were only just so many of the Hollow Tree stories that ever happened, and when they were all written there weren't enough to make another book. So we have taken what were in the first two books, "The Hollow Tree" and "In the Deep Woods," and we have put them together in one big book, and added the three new ones, which were every one to be had, and now here they are with a nice new cloth cover and very cheap when you consider how many there are of them, and that there are no more to be had anywhere, and that there never will be any more, as the Little Lady has said, "even in a thousand days." You will know why, too, when you get to the very last story in the book, and until then, and for a long time

after, I wish you, and Mr. Condé wishes you the happy quiet of the Deep Woods, and the pleasant peace of the Hollow Tree.

THE AUTHOR.

THE LITTLE LADY AND THE STORY TELLER THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO THEM

In the House of Many Windows which stands in a large city and is sometimes called a "flat" by people who, because they are grown up, do not know any better, live the Little Lady and the Story Teller.

The Little Lady is four years old, going on five, and is fond of stories. This makes her and the Story Teller good friends. They mostly sit in the firelight after supper, and while the Little Lady is being undressed they tell each other all that has happened since morning. Then the Little Lady looks into the fire and says: —

"Now, tell me a story."

Sometimes she wants a new story. Sometimes one of the old ones, which must be told always the same, because the Little Lady, like a good many grown up people, does not care for new and revised editions, but wants the old stories in the old words, that sound real and true. Sometimes the Story Teller forgets or improves on his plots, but the Little Lady never forgets and never fails to set the Story Teller right.

THE HOLLOW TREE PEOPLE

THE LITTLE LADY IS INTRODUCED TO THE 'COON, THE 'POSSUM AND THE OLD BLACK CROW

When the Story Teller came home last night the Little Lady had a great deal to tell him. During the afternoon she had built in one corner of the sitting room a house for her three dolls, with a separate room for each. Of course, the house was not a house at all, but only a plan on the floor made with blocks and books. At one side she had laid out a large parlor room, where her family of three – Hettie, Annabelle and the Rubber Boy – could meet together and talk.

"Why," said the Story Teller, "that reminds me of the Crow, the 'Coon and the 'Possum."

"What did they do? Tell me that story," commanded the Little Lady, promptly forgetting her day's work and pulling the Story Teller toward his chair.

The Story Teller stirred the fire and looked into the blaze a moment, thinking. The Little Lady climbed up into his lap and waited. She was used to the Story Teller.

"Tell it," she said, presently.

So then he told her the story of the three friends.

Once upon a time in the far depths of the Big Deep Woods there was a big hollow tree, with three big hollow branches. In one of these there lived a 'Coon, in another a 'Possum and in the third a Big Black Crow.

"But crows don't live in hollow trees," said the Little Woman, who happened to be passing.

"This one did," replied the Story Teller. "I suppose styles have changed some since then."

The hollow tree below was rather dark, so they all used it for a parlor, and only met in there now and then, to dust off their things, or when company came.

Now, the Crow and the 'Coon and the 'Possum were all very fond of good living and mostly of the same things. They were good friends, too, and they often made plans to catch young chickens and other game and carried them out together. Between trips they would sit in their doors and pass the time of day across to each other, just like folks.

Well, one winter, about two weeks after New Year's, it came on to snow in the woods where the hollow tree was, and it snowed, and it snowed, and it snowed.

This was long before sleds or skates, and when big snows always came up over people's windows and snowed them in. And this is what happened to the Crow and the 'Coon and the 'Possum. They were snowed in!

Well, they rather liked it at first, for they had a good deal left over from New Year's dinner, and they used to get together down stairs in the parlor and spread lunch and pitch the bones under the table and talk and tell stories and wonder how long the snow would last.

But they never counted on its lasting half so long as it did. Every day they would look out of an upstairs window that they had, to see if the storm wasn't over. And every day it was just the same, and there was no sign of clearing up. Then they began to get scared, for their cupboards were nearly empty, and there was no chance to catch any more game. At last every scrap was gone, and there wasn't a thing to eat in the house.

The 'Possum went to bed and pulled up the covers and tried to sleep so he would forget it. The 'Coon sat up in a rocking chair and rocked on purpose to think about it, for he was a great hand to plan, and he thought mebbe he could work it out some way. The Crow didn't do either, but walked about his house, picking up first one thing and then another, as people do sometimes when they don't do anything else. But the Crow was luckier than most people who do that, for by and by he picked up quite a big paper sack with something in it. Then he untied it and looked into it quite a while, thinking. It was more than half full of corn meal, and pretty soon he remembered that he had

carried it off once when he was passing Mr. Man's pantry window, not because he wanted it, but because he was a crow, and crows carry off anything that isn't too big, whether they want it or not. Then he hunted around some more and found another sack with some flour in it that he had picked up once in the same way. Then he found some little bags of pepper and salt and a lump of butter.

"My!" said the Little Lady, "but he'd carried off a lot of things!"

Yes, crows always do, and hide them that way. Well, he didn't say anything, but he slipped down stairs and gathered up some of the chicken bones under the table and some pieces of bark and sticks, and brought them up to his own part of the house and shut the door. Then he kindled a little fire in the stove with the sticks and opened his outside door a crack and got a skillet full of snow and put it on, and when the snow melted he dropped in the chicken bones and let them stew, and then a little of the flour and some pepper and salt and stirred it, and he had some nice gravy.

By and by the 'Possum and 'Coon smelt it cooking and thought it came from a farm house, and the 'Possum turned over twice and thought of everything he had ever heard of to make people go to sleep, and the 'Coon rocked harder and harder.

Then Mr. Crow poured the gravy into a bowl and set it back on the stove to keep warm while he stirred up some of the cornmeal in some more melted snow, with a little pinch of salt and a little piece of the butter. When it was all stirred good he put it into the skillet and patted it down, and when it was baked nice and brown on both sides it was as good a Johnnie cake as you ever tasted.

He laughed to himself a minute and then he slipped down stairs again and set the table. He put on the bowl of gravy in the centre and cut the Johnnie cake in three pieces. Then he called out as loud as he could: —

"Come to dinner!"

The 'Possum jumped straight up in bed and then lay down again quick, for he thought the Crow was playing a joke on him, which he was, though not the kind he thought. The 'Coon jumped, too, and then went to rocking again, for he thought the same thing. So Mr. Crow opened the 'Possum's door quick and the 'Coon's door quick and let the smell of the nice chicken gravy go right up into their rooms. Then he laughed out loud and called again: —

"Come to dinner while it's hot!"

And down they came, for they couldn't stand that smell. But when they saw the Johnnie cake they thought it was a joke again, for they had never seen any before and didn't know what it was like.

"Dip in and try," said the Crow, and he broke off a piece of his cake and dipped it in the bowl of gravy and began to eat it. So then the 'Possum broke off a piece of his Johnnie cake and dipped it in the gravy and began to eat it, and the 'Coon broke off a piece of his Johnnie cake and dipped it in the gravy and began to eat, too. And then the Crow dipped again, and the 'Possum dipped again, and the 'Coon dipped again.

"It's good," said the 'Possum.

"Yes, it's good," said the 'Coon. "Where did you get it?"

But the Crow did not tell them, and so they dipped and ate, and dipped and ate, until they dipped and ate it all up.

"Drop in again to-morrow," said the Crow when they were done.

So the next day they came again, and the next day they came again, and every day after that they came, until the storm was over and the snow was 'most gone, and Mr. Crow never did tell them the secret of it until once when he wanted to ask a great favor of Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum, but that is too long to tell about to-night.

The Story Teller looked down at the Little Lady.

She was sound asleep.

A JOKE ALL AROUND ABOUT HOLLOW TREE PEOPLE AND THEIR WAYS

"You may tell me some more about the 'Coon and the 'Possum and the Old Black Crow," said the Little Lady, settling herself comfortably and indicating by the motion of her body that she wanted the Story Teller to rock. "They lived in three big hollow limbs of a big hollow tree, you know, and used to meet together sometimes in their parlor and talk."

Why, yes, of course. The Story Teller did know this colony, and hurriedly tried to recall some one of their many adventures. Out of the mists of that long ago time when all animals and men spoke one language and mingled more or less sociably together came presently a dim memory that cleared and brightened as it came, and took form at last in something which the Story Teller told to the Little Lady as.

One day, early in March and during a long wet spell, the 'Coon caught a bad cold. The next morning he stayed in bed, and pulled up the covers and was cross and too sick to go out. This made extra work for the Crow and the 'Possum, who, of course, had to bring him in his meals and take care of him, and Mr. 'Coon, who found how nice it was to be waited on, thought he would take his own time about getting well. He was sick so long that by and by it set Mr. Crow to thinking, and one day, all of a sudden, he was taken ill, too, and coughed and took on, and called across to the others that he was sick and couldn't come out, either.

This made still more work for the 'Possum, who now had to catch game for three, besides waiting on sick folks and taking care of their houses. So by and by Mr. 'Possum got to thinking some, as well as the others, and one morning, while the Crow and the 'Coon were lying all snug in bed and laughing to themselves at the trick they were playing, and thinking of the nice breakfast they were to have, they heard all at once the 'Possum calling out that hard work and exposure had been too much for him, and that he was sicker now than both of them put together.

Of course they had to call back to him that they were sorry, and of course they were sorry in one way, and then each of them lay down to see which would be the first to starve out.

Mr. 'Possum had a little the best of it at first, because he had brought in enough the night before to last him for a few meals, but, being very greedy, he soon ate it all up, and before long was just as hungry as either the 'Coon or the Crow, and maybe hungrier.

Every day they all grew emptier and emptier. Sometimes Mr. Crow would get up and slip to the door to see if the 'Possum or the 'Coon was not starting out for food. Sometimes Mr. 'Possum would peep out to see if the 'Coon and the Crow were not going. Sometimes Mr. 'Coon would look out to see if the Crow and the 'Possum hadn't started. Once they all saw each other, and jumped back like a flash.

That night Mr. 'Possum decided that he couldn't stand it any longer. He was so thin that his skin hung on him like a bag, and he hardly had strength enough to curl his tail. So he made a plan to slip through the parlor down stairs, and out the door at the bottom of the tree to find a good supper just for himself. A little after dark, when he thought the others were asleep, he got up softly and dressed himself and took his shoes in his hand.

He was afraid to put them on, for fear he would wake up the Crow and the 'Coon going down stairs.

Well, he slipped down softly, and was just about half way to the door when – biff! he ran right against something in the dark —

"But I thought you said once 'possums could see in the dark?" interrupted the Little Lady, sitting up straight.

They can in just common dark, but this, you see, was hollow tree dark, which is the very darkest dark there is. So he couldn't see a wink, and down he came and down came the other thing, too, till pretty soon – biff! they struck something else, and down all three things came over and over, rattlety-clatter, to the bottom of the stairs, right on out of the door into the moonlight, and what do you suppose was there besides Mr. 'Possum?

"I know," said the Little Lady, eagerly. "The 'Coon and the Old Black Crow?"

Exactly. Both of them dressed and looking foolish and half starved, and each with his shoes in his hand. They had all slipped down softly to get something to eat, because they were so hungry, and, of course, when they looked at each other standing there they all knew very well that none of them had been sick, except Mr. 'Coon a little right at first.

After they had looked at each other for about a minute they all began to laugh, and they laughed and laughed till they cried, and rolled on the ground and kept on laughing to think how they all had fooled each other and been fooled themselves. Then they all hurried off on a big hunt for game, and didn't get back till sunrise.

SOME NEW ACQUAINTANCES THE LITTLE LADY IS INTRODUCED TO MR. JACK RABBIT DURING A VERY EXCITING EXPERIENCE WITH MR. DOG. THE FIRST ADVENTURE OF JACK RABBIT

Once upon a time Mr. Jack Rabbit got up very early and set out for a morning walk. It was bright and sunny, and Mr. Rabbit was feeling so well that he walked and walked. Every little ways he stopped and talked to the Robins and Bluebirds that were up early, too, until by and by he didn't know how far away from home he really was.

"Did he know the way?" asked the Little Lady.

Oh, yes, he knew the way, because you can't lose Mr. Jack Rabbit, no matter what you do, but talking along and not thinking, he had forgotten about its being so far. He was just going to turn back, though, when all of a sudden there was a great loud bark right behind him that made him jump right straight up in the air and commence running before his feet touched the ground.

He didn't stop to ask any questions. He knew that Mr. Dog was out early, too, and that he'd found his tracks and was a-coming lickety split.

"What does that mean – lickety split?"

I don't know, exactly, but Mr. Dog always runs that way when he chases Jack Rabbit, and Mr. Rabbit knew he had no time to waste.

He ran faster than Mr. Dog at first, and got far enough ahead so that when directly he saw Mr. Robin on a limb he slacked up a little minute and said: —

"Mr. Dog's coming to call, and I'm going home to get my house ready."

Then pretty soon he saw Mr. Bluebird, but he didn't have time to pause again.

"Where are you going so fast, Mr. Rabbit?" said the Bluebird.

"To get ready for Mr. Dog; he's coming to call," said the Rabbit as he went by like a streak. Then a little further on he met Mr. Turtle.

"Hi, there!" called the Turtle. "Where are you going so fast, Mr. Rabbit?"

"Dog coming – clean house!" shouted Jack Rabbit, 'most out of breath.

That made the Turtle laugh, 'cause Mr. Turtle is old and smart and he knew why the Rabbit was running so fast.

"Was the Rabbit so afraid of Mr. Dog?" asked the Little Lady.

He was that, but he didn't want anybody to know it if he could help it, and 'specially Mr. Dog.

Well, pretty soon Mr. Dog came by where Mr. Robin was, and he called up: —

"Hello, Mr. Robin! Has Mr. Jack Rabbit passed this way?"

"Why, yes, Mr. Dog, and he stopped a little minute to say that you were coming to see him, and that he had to hurry home to have his house ready."

That kind of surprised Mr. Dog, 'cause he thought the Rabbit was afraid of him, but he kept right on till he came to the Bluebird.

"Did Mr. Rabbit come this way?" he called up without stopping.

"Yes, sir, and hurried right on to have his house ready for you," said the Bluebird.

That surprised Mr. Dog more and more, and he began to think that after all maybe the Rabbit didn't know what he wanted of him and —

"What did he want of him?"

Well, I s'pect it was about the same as the wolf wanted of Red Riding Hood, and Jack Rabbit was so far away from home and getting so tired that there's no telling what might have happened if

it hadn't been for Mr. Turtle. Mr. Turtle was a good friend to Jack Rabbit, 'cause once he beat him in a foot race by playing a trick, and he'd always felt a little sorry for it. So when Mr. Dog came along he got right in the way and said: —

"Hi, there! Hold on, Mr. Dog, or you'll get there before Mr. Rabbit is ready for you. He just passed, and said he had to clean up before you came. I s'pose he wants to get up a fine dinner, too."

Well, that settled it. Mr. Dog stopped and said he wasn't in any hurry at all, but was just running a little because it was a nice morning and he felt well. Of course, he said, he didn't want to get there before Mr. Rabbit was ready for him, and then he trotted along comfortably, thinking how he would eat the Rabbit's fine dinner first, and then there would be time enough for Mr. Rabbit himself afterward.

So, when he got to Jack Rabbit's house he straightened his vest and his necktie a little, and then he knocked and turned around and whistled while he was waiting for Mr. Rabbit to come to the door. But Jack Rabbit didn't come to the door. He opened an upstairs window and said: —

"Why, it's Mr. Dog! Sit right down on the porch, Mr. Dog, till I get my house ready and the dinner cooked."

So Mr. Dog sat down and lit his pipe and smoked and looked at the scenery, while Mr. Rabbit inside he laughed and laughed, and lay down on the bed and finally went to sleep.

Mr. Dog sat there and smoked and smoked, and wished the Rabbit would hurry and let him in, 'cause he wanted to get home to his folks, and it was a long way to travel. By and by he called up and asked him if dinner wasn't ready yet. That waked Jack Rabbit up, and he looked out the window and said that he'd had bad luck with his biscuit and dinner would be late. Then Mr. Dog said he'd come in while he was waiting, but the Rabbit said the house was full of smoke, and he wouldn't think of letting his company sit inside such a pleasant day.

Well, Mr. Dog he sat and sat, and Mr. Jack Rabbit laughed and went to sleep again, and by and by it got so late that Mr. Dog knew if he didn't go home pretty soon he'd "catch it" when he got there. So he called up again to Mr. Rabbit, and said that he'd take anything he happened to have in the house, and that he didn't care much for biscuit anyway. But Jack Rabbit said he would never show his face again if he let his company do that, and that it was a perfect shame that Mr. Dog had waited so long, when he had so far to go. He said that his stove didn't draw worth a cent, and that his fire had gone out once, and he hadn't got it started again yet.

Then Mr. Dog didn't wait to hear another word, but just set out for home, lickety split, with Mr. Jack Rabbit rolling on the bed and laughing to see him go.

"Come again, Mr. Dog!" he called after him. "Come again when you can't stay so long."

But Mr. Dog didn't say a word or look 'round, for he knew by Jack Rabbit's laughing so loud and saying to come when he couldn't stay so long that he'd been fooling him all the time.

"And did he ever go to Jack Rabbit's house again?" asked the Little Lady.

Well, not right away. He didn't go out much of anywhere after that for a while, because people made fun of him and kept calling out when he went by: —

"Come again, Mr. Dog! Come again when you can't stay so long!"

MR. RABBIT'S BIG DINNER

MR. JACK RABBIT ENTERTAINS THE HOLLOW TREE PEOPLE. AN UNWELCOME GUEST ARRIVES CAUSING SOME EXCITEMENT

Once upon a time there came to the big Hollow Tree, where the 'Coon and the 'Possum and the Old Black Crow lived, an invitation from Mr. Jack Rabbit for the three to dine with him next day. Nobody was going to be there, he said, but the Turtle, and for them to come early so's to have a nice long afternoon.

He didn't need to say that, for the 'Possum would have started right off if it had been polite, and the Crow and the 'Coon were both so excited that the 'Coon commenced with pie first at supper and the Crow took his hat to get water in. Then they talked all the evening about their clothes and what they were going to wear, and the 'Possum said he was afraid to look at his best suit for fear it was moth eaten, and the 'Coon and the Crow rummaged through their bureaus and got out all their clean shirts so's to have one ready for the next day.

In the morning they all got up long before daylight, and the 'Possum looked out first and then called over to the others that there had been a light snow in the night, but that it was clear now and just cold enough to give a fellow a good appetite. He was going to eat a slim breakfast, he said, so's to be ready for a big dinner.

They were all dressed and ready long before time, but they managed to stand it until about ten o'clock, and then the 'Possum said he was just naturally getting gray headed waiting for that dinner, and off they started.

Mr. Jack Rabbit had got up early, too, that morning, and had the table 'most set when they came. He had his sleeves rolled up and an apron on, and the way he was flying around and getting ready was a caution. The 'Coon and the Crow sat down in the parlor, and looked at the album and some travel books they found on the table, but Mr. 'Possum was so hungry after his light breakfast that he could not keep out of the kitchen, where it smelled good, and stood around and talked to Jack Rabbit, and asked him where he got his chickens, and if he thought Mr. Fox would spare him some, too, and if Mr. Rabbit had any trouble getting his biscuits to rise in cold weather.

Then the Rabbit gave the 'Possum some new receipts, and Mr. 'Possum tasted of everything, a great big taste, making believe he wanted to see just how it was made, but really because he was almost starved, and couldn't wait.

Well, pretty soon Mr. Turtle straddled in, and everything was on the table and they all sat down. The 'Possum had tasted so much in the kitchen that he wasn't so starved as the 'Coon and the Crow, and behaved very politely, and stepped on the 'Coon's toe under the table because he ate so greedily, and whispered to the Crow not to shovel the food about on his plate, as if he were cleaning snow off a roof.

They were all too busy to say much at first, but pretty soon they got to talking and telling stories, and Jack Rabbit told about the time that Mr. Dog chased him home, and how he kept Mr. Dog sitting out on the porch all the afternoon waiting for dinner to be ready. Then Mr. Turtle up and told about his stopping Mr. Dog that day, telling him that the Rabbit had gone home to get dinner for him, and they all laughed, and the 'Coon and the 'Possum said that Mr. Dog thought they were afraid of him, too, but the first time they got a chance they were going to show him a few things that would open his eyes. That made the Crow laugh till he coughed and strangled, and when the Rabbit said he wasn't afraid, either, the Turtle laughed, too. Then the 'Coon and the 'Possum and Mr. Jack Rabbit all pounded on the table, and said, "Just show us Mr. Dog, and you'll see whether

we're afraid or not," and right then, as they said these words, there came a loud knock, and a great big bow! wow! wow! right at the door, and Mr. Jack Rabbit fell over backward, and Mr. 'Coon upset his coffee, and Mr. 'Possum, being stuffed so he could hardly move, rolled under the table and fainted dead away.

"Wasn't the Crow and Mr. Turtle scared some, too?" interrupted the Little Lady.

Not a bit. Mr. Dog is good friends with the Crow and the Turtle. Of course they were afraid some for the Rabbit and the 'Coon and the 'Possum, but they didn't think Mr. Dog could get in, because the door was locked, so they laughed and pounded on the table as the others had done and said: —

"Oh, yes, just show us Mr. Dog! Just show us Mr. Dog!"

That made the Rabbit feel ashamed, 'cause he was in his own house, so he hopped up quick and marched over to the door and said: —

"Why, Mr. Dog, is that you out there?"

Mr. Dog said it was, and that he had seen all the tracks in the snow, and just thought he'd like to take a hand in that big dinner himself. That made the hair on Mr. 'Coon's head stand right straight up, and Mr. 'Possum, who had rolled under the table, gave a groan and crawled over behind a long curtain, where he could faint and be covered up at the same time. Mr. Rabbit thought a little minute and then said, very politely: —

"It's just too bad, Mr. Dog, I'll declare it is. But every time you come it seems like something happens to keep me from having your company. We've just got up from the table and there isn't a thing left, and besides, Mr. 'Possum had a sick turn a minute ago, and we're all upside down and every which way."

But Mr. Dog said he wasn't afraid but that there'd be plenty for him to eat, and that he was a pretty good hand with sick folks himself. Then he gave another great loud bark and said: —

"You fooled me once, but you'll fool me no more,
So lift up the latch and open the door!"

Mr. Dog talks poetry that way sometimes when he gets excited. But Jack Rabbit said he really couldn't think of inviting him in, the way things were, and that it would likely be after sundown before he'd be ready for him. Of course, he said, Mr. Dog couldn't wait that long, he knew, and that he s'posed, after all, they'd have to do without his comp'ny this time. Then Mr. Dog said that his folks were away from home now, and that he could stay there all night if he wanted to, but that he didn't want to and didn't propose to, and then he gave another great big bow wow wow! and said: —

"You fooled me once, but you can't ag'in;
Open the door or I'll break it in!"

Jack Rabbit and Mr. 'Coon both jumped when they heard that, and Mr. 'Possum almost died. It worried the Crow and the Turtle some, too, for they knew if he did break in the door there'd be a big row and no telling how it would end. And just then Mr. Dog gave a big run and a jump against the door, and it squeaked and opened a little, so that the Rabbit could see a streak of light through it and Mr. Dog's yellow legs and tail. When he saw that Jack Rabbit just gave one spring and landed on the top shelf of his china closet. Mr. 'Possum jumped up and ran around the room and fainted in two or three different places, trying to find one that was safer than the other, and Mr. 'Coon scampered up the Rabbit's new lace curtains and hung on to the pole for dear life. The Crow and the Turtle just kept still and got ready to argue some with Mr. Dog when he got in.

Pretty soon he came, bang! against the door again, and this time a good deal harder than before, and it squeaked louder and the crack was wider, for Mr. Dog had jumped against it as hard as ever he could, backward. And right there Mr. Dog made a mistake, for in just that little second while the crack was open the end of his tail got in it, and the door smacked right down on it, and there he was.

"Ho!" said the Little Lady. "Was he caught tight?"

He was that. The harder he pulled the tighter it pinched, and he howled like a good fellow. You wouldn't have thought that such a little bit of his tail would make him howl so loud, but it did, and he couldn't get far enough away from the door to jump against it again. Well, Mr. Rabbit didn't let on that anything had happened, but just came down out of the china closet as cool as you please, with the dessert dishes on his arm, and the 'Possum said his sick turn had passed off, and the 'Coon came down from the curtain and mentioned that he always liked to take a little exercise during a heavy meal that way. Then they had dessert, and all the time Mr. Dog was making a big fuss outside, and by and by he began to beg and promise anything if they'd just let him loose.

Mr. Rabbit called out to him that, being as his folks were away now, he needn't be in any hurry, and that he might just as well stay there all night if he wanted to. Then Mr. Dog called out to the Turtle and the Crow to "prize" open the door and let him get his tail out, but they both said that they couldn't think of being impolite with Jack Rabbit in his own house by sending off any of his friends that way.

Well, pretty soon the 'Coon and the 'Possum said they must be going, they guessed, so Mr. Rabbit let them out the back door, and they went around and said goodbye to Mr. Dog and hoped he was having a nice time. And Mr. Dog told them, with tears in his eyes, that he was sorry to see them go and that he hoped to meet them again. Then the 'Coon and the 'Possum both laughed and took a good look at Mr. Dog, for they had never been so close to him before in their lives. They kept on laughing and looking around as far as they could see, and said it was the best joke they had ever heard of.

The Crow and the Turtle didn't go right away. They stayed and had a talk with Jack Rabbit first so as to give the 'Coon and the 'Possum time to get home. By and by they bade goodbye to Mr. Rabbit and said they'd had a nice time, and went out the back door, too, and when it was shut and locked tight Jack Rabbit told Mr. Dog if he'd promise to go right home and behave himself, and not go gallivanting around the country, he'd let him loose. Mr. Dog promised, and said his tail was numb clear up to his ears, and for Mr. Rabbit to please hurry. Then Jack Rabbit got a stick of stovewood and pried the door open a little wider, and Mr. Dog's tail came out just as the Turtle and the Crow stepped around the corner.

"Was Mr. Dog mad at them?" asked the Little Lady, anxiously.

Not very. He was too much ashamed, and, besides, they walked along with him and said they were sorry and thought it was too bad the way he had been treated, and Mr. Crow said he'd have Mr. Dog over to his house for supper before long, which would be a good joke on the 'Coon and 'Possum, too, because they'd have to stay locked in their rooms. That made Mr. Dog perk up a little, but he didn't have much to say, and he didn't even look around when Mr. Jack Rabbit sat up in his window and called after them: —

"I fooled you once and I fooled you twice,
If you come again I'll fool you thrice!"

For Jack Rabbit could make up poetry, too, sometimes when he felt well.

THE CROW'S COMPANY

MR. CROW GIVES A SUPPER TO MR. DOG, ACCORDING TO PROMISE

Well, you remember (said the Story Teller) that the Crow promised Mr. Dog he would have him over sometime for supper, and play a joke on Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum. So one morning he sent word to Mr. Dog, and the same day gave it out to the 'Coon and the 'Possum that we would have company for supper the next evening, and that he was going to set the big table in the parlor and have both of them come down and take supper with him, too. He didn't tell them he was going to have Mr. Dog and went around laughing to himself, because he thought it would be very funny for them to get all ready for a fine supper and then be afraid to come down when they found out who was there. Of course he meant to tell them before they came, because he didn't really want any fuss there in the parlor, especially when he had his good things on the table.

Well, the 'Coon and the 'Possum said they'd come, and they guessed and guessed who it was that the Crow was going to have, but he wouldn't tell them, and by and by they began to suspect that maybe it was somebody that they didn't care much about. So they had a little private talk together and fixed up a way to be ready for him.

After that they went around smiling a good deal, and the Crow thought it was on account of the big supper they were expecting, so he smiled, too, and was busy getting ready for the fun next day.

Well, next day about five o'clock, Mr. Dog came and knocked at the door down stairs, and Mr. Crow slipped down and let him in, and took him right up to the parlor where supper was all on the table except the fried chicken, which he had left on the stove to keep hot. Mr. Dog took a seat and glanced round and said that everything looked good and smelled even better than it looked. The Crow liked to hear that, for he was always proud of his cooking and he laughed all over, and kept on laughing when he thought what a joke he was going to have right away on Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum.

Then, pretty soon he had everything ready, and said to Mr. Dog: —

"Now I'm going to call my friends down, but they won't come." And then they both laughed soft like, for of course Mr. Dog knew all about the joke, too.

So then the Crow went up to the 'Possum's door and knocked and said: —

"Supper's ready! Comp'ny's here! Come down!"

"Who is your company, Mr. Crow?"

"Oh, just home folks. Nobody but Mr. Dog. We've got fried chicken and it's all ready."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Crow, but I've just had comp'ny come, too, and I couldn't come unless I brought my comp'ny."

"Who is it?" said the Crow.

"Nobody but home folks. Mr. Cat just dropped in to spend the evening."

The Old Black Crow gave a jump when he heard that, for he was afraid as death of Mr. Cat, and he said, quick as a wink: —

"Table's all full and no room for more! Table's all full and no room for more!"

Then he hurried over to the 'Coon's door and called: —

"Supper's all ready! Comp'ny's here! Come down!"

Mr. 'Coon put an extra chair against the door and said: —

"Who is your comp'ny, Mr. Crow?"

"Oh, just home folks. Nobody but Mr. Dog. We've got fried chicken and it's all on the table."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Crow, but comp'ny just came here, too, and I'd have to bring him along."

"Who is it, Mr. 'Coon?"

"Only home folks. Just Mr. Hawk run in for the evening."

Mr. Crow nearly fell over backward when he heard that. He had stolen some of Mr. Hawk's chickens the day before, and the 'Coon knew about it. The Hawk would surely know the flavor of his own chickens if he came down, and, anyhow, Mr. 'Coon would tell him. So he called out just as quick as lightning: —

"Table's all full and no room for more! Table's all full and no room for more!"

Then he hurried right back to Mr. Dog and told him not to wait, because Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum could not come, and Mr. Dog laughed and pitched into the fried chicken and said it was the best joke and the best chicken he had ever heard of. But the Crow some way did not think it was as good a joke as he had expected and could not eat his supper for looking up at the doors where the 'Possum and the 'Coon were.

By and by, when Mr. Dog had finished his supper and had a smoke, he said he guessed his folks would be looking for him and that he would have to go. Then the Crow nearly had a fit and begged and begged him to spend the evening. He said Mr. Dog came so seldom that he ought to stay, now he was there, so at last Mr. Dog sat down again and said he might as well sit a little longer, he s'posed.

Well, the Crow talked and talked and told stories and got Mr. Dog to telling stories, too, and once he slipped around behind Mr. Dog while he was talking away and put the clock back, but it didn't do any good. Mr. Dog said by and by that he was obliged to go and that he was afraid now he would be locked out when he got home. So the Crow thought as quick as he could and called out loud: —

"Time comp'ny was going home! Time comp'ny was going home!"

But the 'Possum called back that his comp'ny wasn't in any hurry. And the Coon called back that his comp'ny wasn't in any hurry either.

Then Mr. Crow was in a bad fix. He hopped around first on one foot and then on the other while Mr. Dog was putting on his things, and as soon as he was gone he skipped right up into his own room and locked the door tight.

Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum were looking out of their windows and saw Mr. Dog outside as he lit his pipe and marched off laughing. And the 'Coon and 'Possum laughed, too, for they hadn't had any company at all, but had been making believe all the time. Then they unbarred their doors and went down into the parlor, where there was a lot of the supper left, and sat down and passed the fried chicken across to each other and laughed some more and said Mr. Crow was certainly a mighty good cook.

"Didn't they give the Crow any?" asked the Little Lady, who had been so still that the Story Teller believed her asleep.

Pretty soon they did. They said it was too bad to punish him any longer, so they went up to his door, and the 'Possum knocked and said: —

"Better come down to supper, Mr. Crow. Comp'ny's all gone!"

And then the 'Coon he knocked and said: —

"Better come down to fried chicken, Mr. Crow. Comp'ny's all gone!"

So then the Crow opened the door a little crack and peeked out, and when he saw nobody was there but the 'Coon and the 'Possum he stepped out as brave as you please and said that he had been to one big supper and was sleepy and just going to bed, but that he believed he would sit down with them just to be sociable. He was sorry, he said, that he couldn't have asked them to bring down their comp'ny, but he hadn't fixed for so many, and, after all, it would be nicer now, all alone together.

So then the 'Coon and the 'Possum and the Old Black Crow all sat down to the table together and ate and ate and ate, and the Old Black Crow ate most of all.

THE FIRST MOON STORY

A STORY IN WHICH MR. 'COON TELLS MR. 'POSSUM AND MR. RABBIT SOMETHING ABOUT THE MOON

Last night when the full moon looked into the House of Many Windows the Little Lady stood looking at it for a long time.

She had been told that the moon was another world, and that the stars were worlds, too, and she was trying to think how that could be when they looked so small and close together; also if it were all true, and they were so big, why they did not get against each other when the sky itself wasn't any bigger than the world and came down to it everywhere at the edges. She asked the Story Teller about it when he came in.

The Story Teller tried to explain that the stars and moon were not so close together as they looked, and that some were a good deal further away than others, and a lot more things, all of which the Little Lady doubted, because she said she could see for herself that the sky was just a round blue ceiling, and that the moon and stars were right against it, and if any of them were further away than the others they would be over beyond the ceiling and wouldn't show. This was a good deal easier for the Story Teller to understand than the things he had been trying to tell, so he said, "Why, of course. I hadn't thought of that," and then he said he knew some stories about the moon that were a good deal truer, he guessed, than most anything else. And then he told her, first of all,

MR. 'COON'S STORY OF THE MOON

Once upon a time, when Mr. Dog had invited the Crow and the Turtle to his house for supper, Jack Rabbit came over to the Hollow Tree to spend the evening with the 'Coon and the 'Possum, and they took a long walk. They walked and walked, till by and by they got to the edge of the world and sat down and hung their feet over and talked and looked at the full moon that was just rising.

They talked first about one thing and then another, and then they got to talking about the moon, and come to find out one thought it was this, and one thought it was that, and the third man, which was the 'Coon, said he knew it wasn't either one, for the moon had once belonged to his family and he knew all about it.

So then they agreed between them to let each one tell what he knew about the moon and how he came to know it and all about it. And Mr. 'Coon told first.

"Well," he said, "a long time ago, about sixteen great-great-grandfathers back, our family lived in a big woods in a big tree that was on top of a high mountain and touched the sky with its top limbs when the wind blew.

"It was a good big family, too; I don't know just how many there were, but I know there was an old grandmother besides the father and mother and a lot of children. They were a very noisy lot of youngsters, so the story goes, nearly all of the same age, and used to tear around the house and never want to do anything but play and run up and down stairs until my sixteenth great-great-grandmother used to stop her ears and say that those children would be the death of her, and she wished there was a school in the neighborhood so they could be sent to it.

"But those children never wanted to learn anything, and never thought about even knowing their letters, until one day Father 'Coon came home from town with a brand new shiny tin plate with the alphabet around on the edge of it. When they saw that they all made a grab for it and claimed it, but Father 'Coon held it up high and said that it was for the one that first learned his letters. He said that they were to take turns using it, a different one each time, and whoever was using it could

study his letters while he was eating. He said that when it had been all around once he would see who knew the most letters and would give it to him the next time, and so on, and the first one who knew all of them should have it for his own, to keep.

"Well, the first night he gave it to a fellow named Bushy and sat down by him and told him the letters over and over, and all the rest leaned across the table and looked on instead of eating, all except one fellow, named Smart, who was good at learning things by heart, and he just listened and ate, too. He did that right along every meal till it came his turn, and then he pretended to look very close, but all the time he was only saying the letters over and over in his head and laughing to himself to think how he was going to surprise everybody when the time came to see who knew the most.

"And that's just what he did do. For when the plate had gone clear around and Father 'Coon called them all up one night after supper to see who could tell the most letters on it, some only knew three and some four, and some of them knew six, but when it came Smart's turn he commenced when Father 'Coon pointed to A, and said every one clear through to & just as fast as he could say them. Then the others all began to cry, and Smart took the plate and walked off with it into the next room and sat down and was saying the alphabet over and over, when all at once Bushy happened to notice that when Smart pointed out the letters for himself and said them he was just as apt to begin any place else as at A, and that he only knew them by heart and didn't know a single one when he saw it.

"Of course that made Bushy mad, and he ran out and told the rest that Smart didn't know his alphabet at all, and that he couldn't even tell A when it was by itself, and all the others set up a great fuss, too. They said he had to go out with the plate to Father 'Coon again, and Smart said he wouldn't do it; that it was his plate, and that he had said his letters once and didn't intend to say them again for anybody. Then Bushy grabbed the plate and said it was his, because he knew six letters, and then a little fellow named Stripe grabbed it away from Bushy because he knew six letters, too, and pretty soon they all got into a regular fight over it, and made such an awful noise that Grandmother 'Coon thought the tree was falling down, and came running in, and when she saw what they were fighting over she grabbed it away from all of them and opened the window and flung it out just as hard as ever she could fling it.

"And the tin plate went sailing and shining right straight up in the air, and kept on sailing and shining till it got to the sky; and then, of course, it couldn't get any further, but it went right on sailing and shining in the sky, and has been there, sailing and shining, ever since.

"And that," said Mr. 'Coon, "that's the moon!"

"Oh, pshaw!" said the 'Possum.

"What made those dark spots on it?" said the Rabbit.

Mr. 'Coon didn't know what to say to that just at first, and then he happened to think.

"Why," he said, "that's where they rubbed the tin off fighting over it."

"Nonsense!" said the Rabbit.

THE SECOND MOON STORY

MR. 'POSSUM HAS SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT THE MOON WHICH SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT

This is the story told by Mr. 'Possum when he and Mr. 'Coon and Jack Rabbit sat on the edge of the world and hung their feet over and looked at the moon: —

"Well," said Mr. 'Possum, "a good many years ago, when there were a great many more chickens than there are now, and Mr. Man took good care of them for us and let them roost in trees instead of locking them up every night in an unhealthy little pen, my folks used to go around sometimes after Mr. Man had gone to bed, and look them over and pick out what they wanted for the next day.

"I don't know why we ever began the custom of picking out our victuals at night that way, when it was dark and dangerous, but somehow we always did it, and have kept it up ever since."

"Humph!" said the 'Coon.

"Yes," continued Mr. 'Possum, "that was before there was any moon, and the nights were always dark. It wasn't a good time to choose food, and very often my folks made a mistake and got a seven-year-old bantam hen instead of a spring pullet, which is about the same size.

"This happened so much that by and by a very wise 'Possum, named Smoothe, said that if they would keep him in chickens of a youthful and tender sort he would fix up a light, so they could see and know what they were doing. They all agreed to do it, and that night Smoothe built a big fire in the top of a tall tree and sat up there and 'tended to it until nearly morning, and my folks brought home the finest lot of chickens that Mr. Man had raised for them in a good many years.

"Well, there was never any trouble after that to pick out young meat, and Smoothe kept the fire going nights and ate a good deal and got pretty fat, so that he didn't like to work, and kept planning some way to make his job easier. He wanted to find a light that he wouldn't have to 'tend to and keep piling wood on all night. He thought about this for a long time, and used to fall asleep and dream about it, and once he let the fire go out, and fell out of the tree and nearly gave up his job altogether.

"Well, while he was getting well he had a good deal of company, and one day a top-knot crow named Dusk came to see him. Now, you know that our friend Mr. Crow is a wise bird to-day, but in the old times a top-knot crow was wiser than anything that now flies or walks, and Dusk was a very old bird. He knew a great deal about Mr. Man and his ways, and he told Smoothe that he had seen in Mr. Man's pantry, where he went sometimes, a light that would not go out during a whole night, and that had a big bright something behind it that would throw the light in any direction. Dusk, who used to carry off almost everything he saw, whether he wanted it or not, said that he thought he might carry this light off if Smoothe would be willing to let him have a few chickens for a party he was going to give.

"Smoothe told him he might take his pick out of his share of the chickens for the next six months if he would only bring that light, and Dusk didn't waste any time, but brought it the very next evening.

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