

# **PAINE ALBERT BIGELOW**

HOLLOW TREE NIGHTS  
AND DAYS

Albert Paine

**Hollow Tree Nights and Days**

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**Paine A.**

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# **Albert Bigelow Paine**

## **Hollow Tree Nights and Days**

### **EXPLANATION OF THE NEW MAP**

This is a new map of the Deep Woods, showing a good many new things. The three spots on the Edge of the World, away down, show where the Hollow Tree people and Mr. Rabbit sat when they told their star stories. Mr. 'Coon leaned against the tree, so his spot does not show. The little bush is the one that Mr. 'Possum curled his tail around when he wanted to take a nap, to keep from falling over into the Deep Nowhere. Right straight above the spots is the old well that Mr. 'Possum fell into and lost his chicken. Over toward the Wide Blue Water is Cousin Redfield's cave and his bear ladder. The path leads to where he fell in. You can also find Mr. Turtle's fish-poles which he keeps set, just above his house. The Hill there is where the Deep Woods people tried Mr. 'Possum's car, and the thing that looks like a barber-pole is where they landed. They put it up afterward to mark the place. If you follow the road around you will come to Mr. 'Coon's bee-tree, and Mr. Robin's tree, near the Race Track. There ought to be a good many more roads and things, but the artists said if they put everything on the map it would look too mixed up. Remember, with Deep Woods folks the top of the map is south.

## GREETINGS FROM THE STORY TELLER AND THE ARTIST

Once upon a time, ever so long ago, the Story Teller told the Little Lady all about the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow who lived in three hollow branches of a Big Hollow Tree that stood in the far depths of the Big Deep Woods. The Crow and 'Coon and 'Possum were great friends and used to meet in the big family room down-stairs and have plenty of good things to eat, and then sit by the fire and smoke and tell stories, and sometimes they would invite the other Deep Woods people, like Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Turtle and the rest, and even Mr. Dog, after they became friends with him, though Mr. Dog did not really live *in* the Deep Woods, but only on the edge of it, with Mr. Man.

The Hollow Tree people never did get to be friends with Mr. Man. They liked to watch him, sometimes, from a distance, and would borrow things from him when he wasn't at home, but they never just felt like calling on him or asking him to the Hollow Tree. You see, Mr. Man really belonged to one world and the Hollow Tree people belonged to another, and something is always likely to happen when any one, even an author, goes to mixing up worlds.

Well, by and by the Story Teller, and the Artist who drew the pictures, put the Hollow Tree and Deep Woods stories into a book to preserve them, for they thought that was going to be all of them, because Mr. Dog, who told them, had gone away and they did not know where they could ever find any more. Even when other Little Ladies and their brothers wrote and asked for more Hollow Tree stories there were no more to send for a very long time. But then one day the Story Teller and the Artist themselves moved into the very edge of the Big Deep Woods, and there they found some more stories about the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow, because Mr. Dog had left a young relative, very fine and handsome, who was also friends with the Hollow Tree people and could tell everything as it happened, right along. So the Story Teller and the Artist made up *The Hollow Tree Snowed-In Book* which was all about once when the Hollow Tree people and their friends were "snowed in" and had to sit around the fire and eat good things and play games and tell stories to pass the time.

How Little Ladies do slip away from us! The first Hollow Tree stories were told for one who is now a Big Lady, and the Snowed-In stories for another, who will soon be a Big Lady, too. But in the Deep Woods the years do not count. The Hollow Tree people never grow any older, but stay always the same, and the Story Teller and the Artist have to keep stepping backward to find out the new Hollow Tree stories and to tell them to the new Little People that come along.

So now after a good many years we have a third Hollow Tree book, which will surely be the last one, because things are so likely to go in threes, like three cheers, and three trials, and three strikes and out. The Deep Woods people will never desert the Hollow Tree, and though after this we should not hear from them again, we may imagine they are doing many of the same things, and keeping safe and happy during all the future Hollow Tree Nights and Days.



## **LITTLE JACK RABBIT AND BUNTY BUN**

### **JACK RABBIT TELLS ABOUT HIS SCHOOL-DAYS, AND WHY HE HAS ALWAYS THOUGHT IT BEST TO LIVE ALONE**

The Little Lady has been poring over a first reader, because she has started to school now, and there are lessons almost every evening. Then by and by she closes the book and comes over to where the Story Teller is looking into the big open fire.

The little lady looks into the fire, too, and thinks. Then pretty soon she climbs into the Story Teller's lap and leans back, and looks into the fire and thinks some more.

"Did the Hollow Tree people ever go to school?" she says. "I s'pose they did, though, or they wouldn't know how to read and write, and send invitations and things."

The Story Teller knocks the ashes out of his pipe and lays it on the little stand beside him.

"Why, yes indeed, they went to school," he says. "Didn't I ever tell you about that?"

"You couldn't have," says the Little Lady, "because I never thought about its happening, myself, until just now."

"Well, then," says the Story Teller, "I'll tell you something that Mr. Jack Rabbit told about, one night in the Hollow Tree, when he had been having supper with the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow, and they were all sitting before the fire, just as we are sitting now. It isn't really much about school, but it shows that Jack Rabbit went to one, and explains something else, too."

Mr. Crow had cooked all his best things that evening, and everything had tasted even better than usual. Mr. 'Possum said he didn't really feel as if he could move from his chair when supper was over, but that he wanted to do the right thing, and would watch the fire and poke it while the others were clearing the table, so that it would be nice and bright for them when they were ready to enjoy it. So then the Crow and the 'Coon and Jack Rabbit flew about and did up the work, while Mr. 'Possum put on a fresh stick, then lit his pipe, and leaned back and stretched out his feet, and said it surely was nice to have a fine, cozy home like theirs, and that he was always happy when he was doing things for people who appreciated it, like those present.

Mr. Rabbit said he certainly did appreciate being invited to the Hollow Tree, living, as he did, alone, an old bachelor, with nobody to share his home; and then pretty soon the work was all done up, and Jack Rabbit and the others drew up their chairs, too, and lit their pipes, and for a while nobody said anything, but just smoked and felt happy.

Mr. 'Possum was first to say something. He leaned over and knocked the ashes out of his pipe, then leaned back and crossed his feet, and said he'd been thinking about Mr. Rabbit's lonely life, and wondering why it was that, with his fondness for society and such a good home, he had stayed a bachelor so long. Then the Crow and the 'Coon said so, too, and asked Jack Rabbit why it was.

Mr. Rabbit said it was quite a sad story, and perhaps not very interesting, as it had all happened so long ago, when he was quite small.

"My folks lived then in the Heavy Thickets, over beyond the Wide Grasslands," he said; "it was a very nice place, with a good school, kept by a stiff-kneed rabbit named Whack—J. Hickory Whack—which seemed to fit him. I was the only child in our family that year, and I suppose I was spoiled. I remember my folks let me run and play a good deal, instead of making me study my lessons, so that Hickory Whack did not like me much, though he was afraid to be as severe as he was with most of the others, my folks being quite well off and I an only child. Of course, the other scholars didn't like that, and I don't blame them now, though I didn't care then whether they liked it or not. I didn't care for anything, except to go capering about the woods, gathering flowers and trying to make up

poetry, when I should have been doing my examples. I didn't like school or J. Hickory Whack, and every morning I hated to start, until, one day, a new family moved into our neighborhood. They were named Bun, and one of them was a little girl named Bunty—Bunty Bun."

When Mr. Rabbit got that far in his story he stopped a minute and sighed, and filled his pipe again, and took out his handkerchief, and said he guessed a little speck of ashes had got into his eye. Then he said:

"The Buns lived close to us, and the children went the same way to school as I did. Bunty was little and fat, and was generally behind, and I stayed behind with her, after the first morning. She seemed a very well-behaved little Miss Rabbit, and was quite plump, as I say, and used to have plump little books, which I used to carry for her, and think how nice it would be if I could always go on carrying them and helping Bunty Bun over the mud-holes and ditches."

Mr. Rabbit got another speck of ashes in his eye, and had to wipe it several times and blow his nose hard. Then he said:

"She wore a little red cape and a pretty linsey dress, and her ears were quite slim and silky, and used to stand straight up, except when she was sad over anything. Then they used to lop down quite flat; when I saw them that way it made me sad, too. But when she was pleased and happy, they set straight up and she seemed to laugh all over.

"I forgot all about not liking school. I used to watch until I saw the Bun children coming, and then run out and get behind, with Bunty, and take her books, and wish there was a good deal farther to go. When it got to be spring and flowers began to bloom, I would gather every one I saw for Bunty Bun, and once I made up a poem for her. I remember it still. It said:

"Oh, Bunty Bun,  
The spring's begun,  
The violet's are in bloom.  
Oh, Bunty Bun,  
I'll pick you one,  
All full of sweet perfume.

"The sun is bright,  
Our hearts are light,  
And we will skip and run.  
Prick up your ears,  
And dry your tears,  
Dear bunny, Bunty Bun."

"Mr. Rabbit said he didn't suppose it was the best poetry, but that it had meant so much to him then that he couldn't judge it now, and, anyway, it was no matter any more. The other children used to tease them a good deal, Mr. Rabbit said, but that he and Bunty had not minded it so very much, only, of course, he wouldn't have had them see his poem for anything. The trouble began when Bunty Bun decided to have a flower-garden.

"She used to see new flowers along the way to and from school that she wanted me to dig up for her so she could set them out in her garden. I liked to do it better than anything, too, only not *going* to school, because the ground was pretty soft and sticky, and it made my hands so dirty, and Hickory Whack was particular about the children having clean hands. I used to hide the flower plants under the corner of the school-house every morning, and hurry in and wash my hands before school took up, and the others used to watch me and giggle, for they knew what all that dirt came from. Our school was just one room, and there were rows of nails by the door to hang our things on, and there



was a bench with the wash-basin and the water-pail on it, the basin and the pail side by side. It was a misfortune for me that they were put so close together that way. But never mind—it is a long time ago.

"One morning in April when it was quite chilly Bunty Bun saw several pretty plants on the way to school that she wanted me to dig up for her, root and all, for her garden. I said it would be better to get them on the way home that night, but Bunty said some one might come along and take them and that she wouldn't lose those nice plants for anything. So I got down on my knees and dug and dug with my hands in the cold, sticky dirt, until I got the roots all up for her, and my hands were quite numb and a sight to look at. Then we hurried on to school, for it was getting late.

"When we got to the door I pushed the flower plants under the edge of the house, and we went in, Bunty ahead of me. School had just taken up, and all the scholars were in their seats except us. Bunty Bun went over to the girls' side to hang up her things, and I stuck my hat on a nail on our side, and stepped as quick as I could to the bench where the water was, to wash my hands.

"There was some water in the basin, and I was just about to dip my hands in when I looked over toward Bunty Bun and saw her little ears all lopped down flat, for the other little girl rabbits were giggling at her for coming in with me and being late. The boy rabbits were giggling at me, too, which I did not mind so much. But I forgot all about the basin, for a minute, looking at Bunty Bun's ears, and when I started to wash my hands I kept looking at Bunty, and in that way made an awful mistake; for just when the water was feeling so good to my poor chilled hands, and I was waving them about in it, all the time looking at Bunty's droopy ears, somebody suddenly called out, 'Oh, teacher, Jacky Rabbit's washing his hands in the water-pail! Jacky Rabbit's washing his hands in the water-pail, teacher!'

"And sure enough, I was! Looking at Bunty Bun and pitying her, I had made a miss-dip, and everybody was looking at me; and J. Hickory Whack said, in the most awful voice, 'Jack Rabbit, you come here, at once!'"

Mr. Rabbit said he could hardly get to Hickory Whack's desk, he was so weak in the knees, and when Mr. Whack had asked him what he had meant by such actions he had been almost too feeble to speak.

"I couldn't think of a word," he said, "for, of course, the only thing I could say was that I had been looking at Bunty Bun's little droopy ears, and that would have made everybody laugh, and been much worse. Then the teacher said he didn't see how he was going to keep himself from whipping me soundly, he felt so much that way, and he said it in such an awful tone that all the others were pretty scared, too, and quite still, all of them but just one—one scholar on the girls' side, who giggled right out loud—and I know you will hardly believe it when I tell you that it was Bunty Bun! I was sure I knew her laugh, but I couldn't believe it and, scared as I was, I turned to look, and there she sat, looking really amused, her slim little ears sticking straight up as they always did when she enjoyed anything."

Mr. Rabbit rose and walked across the room and back, and sat down again, quite excitedly.

"Think of it, after all I had done for her! I saw at once that there would be no pleasure in carrying her books and helping her over the mud-puddles in the way I had planned. And just then Hickory Whack grabbed a stick and reached for me. But he didn't reach quite far enough, for I was always rather spry, and I was half-way to the door with one spring, and out of it and on the way home, the next. Of course he couldn't catch me, with his stiff leg, and he didn't try. When I got home I told my folks that I didn't feel well, and needed a change of scene. So they said I could visit some relatives in the Big Deep Woods—an old aunt and uncle, and I set out on the trip within less than five minutes, for I was tired of the Thickets. My aunt and uncle were so glad to see me that I stayed with them, and when they died they left me their property. So I've always stayed over this way, and live in it still. Sometimes I go over to the Heavy Thickets, and once I saw Bunty Bun. She is married, and shows her age. She used to be fat and pretty and silly. Now she is just fat and silly, though I don't suppose

she can help those things. Still, I had a narrow escape, and I've never thought of doing garden work since then for anybody but myself and my good friends, like those of the Hollow Tree."

## MR. 'POSSUM'S SICK SPELL

### MR. 'POSSUM HAS A NIGHT ADVENTURE WHICH CAUSES EXCITEMENT

Once upon a time, said the Story Teller, something very sad nearly happened in the Hollow Tree. It was Mr. 'Possum's turn, one night, to go out and borrow a chicken from Mr. Man's roost, and coming home he fell into an old well and lost his chicken. He nearly lost himself, too, for the water was icy cold and Mr. 'Possum thought he would freeze to death before he could climb out, because the rocks were slippery and he fell back several times.

As it was, he got home almost dead, and next morning was sicker than he had ever been before in his life. He had pains in his chest and other places, and was all stuffed up in his throat and very scared. The 'Coon and the Crow who lived in the Hollow Tree with him were scared, too. They put him to bed in the big room down-stairs, and said they thought they ought to send for somebody, and Mr. Crow said that Mr. Owl was a good hand with sick folks, because he looked so wise and didn't say much, which always made the patient think he knew something.

So Mr. Crow hurried over and brought Mr. Owl, who put on his glasses and looked at Mr. 'Possum's tongue, and felt of his pulse, and listened to his breathing, and said that the cold water seemed to have struck in and that the only thing to do was for Mr. 'Possum to stay in bed and drink hot herb tea and not eat anything, which was a very sad prescription for Mr. 'Possum, because he hated herb tea and was very partial to eating. He groaned when he heard it and said he didn't suppose he'd ever live to enjoy himself again, and that he might just as well have stayed in the well with the chicken, which was a great loss and doing no good to anybody. Then Mr. Owl went away, and told the Crow outside that Mr. 'Possum was a very sick man, and that at his time of life and in his state of flesh his trouble might go hard with him.

So Mr. Crow went back into the kitchen and made up a lot of herb tea and kept it hot on the stove, and Mr. 'Coon sat by Mr. 'Possum's bed and made him drink it almost constantly, which Mr. 'Possum said might cure him if he didn't die of it before the curing commenced.

He said if he just had that chicken, made up with a good platter of dumplings, he believed it would do him more good than anything, and he begged the 'Coon to go and fish it out, or to catch another one, and try it on him, and then if he did die he would at least have fewer regrets.

But the Crow and the 'Coon said they must do as Mr. Owl ordered, unless Mr. 'Possum wanted to change doctors, which was not a good plan until the case became hopeless, and that would probably not be before some time in the night. Mr. 'Coon said, though, there was no reason why that nice chicken should be wasted, and as it would still be fresh, he would rig up a hook and line and see if he couldn't save it. So he got out his fishing things and made a grab hook and left Mr. Crow to sit by Mr. 'Possum until he came back. He could follow Mr. 'Possum's track to the place, and in a little while he had the fine, fat chicken, and came home with it and showed it to the patient, who had a sinking spell when he looked at it, and turned his face to the wall and said he seemed to have lived in vain.

Mr. Crow, who always did the cooking, said he'd better put the chicken on right away, under the circumstances, and then he remembered a bottle of medicine he had once seen sitting on Mr. Man's window-sill outside, and he said while the chicken was cooking he'd just step over and get it, as it might do the patient good, and it didn't seem as if anything now could do him any harm.

So the Crow dressed the nice chicken and put it in the pot with the dumplings, and while Mr. 'Coon dosed Mr. 'Possum with the hot herb tea Mr. Crow slipped over to Mr. Man's house and watched a good chance when the folks were at dinner, and got the bottle and came back with it and found Mr. 'Possum taking a nap and the 'Coon setting the table; for the dinner was about done and

there was a delicious smell of dumplings and chicken, which made Mr. 'Possum begin talking in his sleep about starving to death in the midst of plenty. Then he woke up and seemed to suffer a good deal, and the Crow gave him a dose of Mr. Man's medicine, and said that if Mr. 'Possum was still with them next morning they'd send for another doctor.

Mr. 'Possum took the medicine and choked on it, and when he could speak said he wouldn't be with them. He could tell by his feelings, he said, that he would never get through this day of torture, and he wanted to say some last words. Then he said that he wanted the 'Coon to have his Sunday suit, which was getting a little tight for him and would just about fit Mr. 'Coon, and that he wanted the Crow to have his pipe and toilet articles, to remember him by. He said he had tried to do well by them since they had all lived together in the Hollow Tree, and he supposed it would be hard for them to get along without him, but that they would have to do the best they could. Then he guessed he'd try to sleep a little, and closed his eyes. Mr. 'Coon looked at Mr. Crow and shook his head, and they didn't feel like sitting down to dinner right away, and pretty soon when they thought Mr. 'Possum was asleep they slipped softly up to his room to see how sad it would seem without him.

Well, they had only been gone a minute when Mr. 'Possum woke up, for the smell of that chicken and dumpling coming in from Mr. Crow's kitchen was too much for him. When he opened his eyes and found that Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow were not there, and that he felt a little better—perhaps because of Mr. Man's medicine—he thought he might as well step out and take one last look at chicken and dumpling, anyway.

It was quite warm, but, being all in a sweat, he put the bed-sheet around him to protect him from the draughts and went out to the stove and looked into the pot, and when he saw how good it looked he thought he might as well taste of it to see if it was done. So he did, and it tasted so good and seemed so done that he got out a little piece of dumpling on a fork, and blew on it to cool it, and ate it, and then another piece, and then the whole dumpling, which he sopped around in the gravy after each bite. Then when the dumpling was gone he fished up a chicken leg and ate that, and then a wing, and then the gizzard, and felt better all the time, and pretty soon poured out a cup of coffee and drank that, all before he remembered that he was sick abed and not expected to recover. Then he happened to think, and started back to bed, but on the way there he heard Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow talking softly in his room and he forgot again that he was so sick and went up to see about it.

Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow had been quite busy up in Mr. 'Possum's room. They had looked at all the things, and Mr. Crow remarked that there seemed to be a good many which Mr. 'Possum had not mentioned, and which they could divide afterward. Then he picked up Mr. Possum's pipe and tried it to see if it would draw well, as he had noticed, he said, that Mr. 'Possum sometimes had trouble with it, and the 'Coon went over to the closet and looked at Mr. 'Possum's Sunday suit, and pretty soon got it out and tried on the coat, which wouldn't need a thing done to it to make it fit exactly. He said he hoped Mr. 'Possum was resting well, after the medicine, which he supposed was something to make him sleep, as he had seemed drowsy so soon after taking it. He said it would be sad, of course, though it might seem almost a blessing, if Mr. 'Possum should pass away in his sleep, without knowing it, and he hoped Mr. 'Possum would rest in peace and not come back to distress people, as one of Mr. 'Coon's own ancestors had done, a good while ago. Mr. 'Coon said his mother used to tell them about it when she wanted to keep them at home nights, though he didn't really believe in such things much, any more, and he didn't think Mr. 'Possum would be apt to do it, anyway, because he was always quite a hand to rest well. Of course, *any one* was likely to *think* of such things, he said, and get a little nervous, especially at a time like this—and just then Mr. 'Coon looked toward the door that led down to the big room, and Mr. Crow he looked toward that door, too, and Mr. 'Coon gave a great jump, and said:

"Oh, my goodness!" and fell back over Mr. 'Possum's trunk.

And Mr. Crow he gave a great jump, too, and said:

"Oh, my gracious!" and fell back over Mr. 'Possum's chair.

For there in the door stood a figure shrouded all in white, all except the head, which was Mr. 'Possum's, though very solemn, its eyes looking straight at Mr. 'Coon, who still had on Mr. 'Possum's coat, though he was doing his best to get it off, and at Mr. Crow, who still had Mr. 'Possum's pipe, though he was trying every way to hide it, and both of them were scrabbling around on the floor and saying, "Oh, Mr. 'Possum, go away—please go away, Mr. 'Possum—we always loved you, Mr. 'Possum—we can prove it."

But Mr. 'Possum looked straight at Mr. 'Coon, and said in a deep voice:

"What were you doing with my Sunday coat on?"

And Mr. 'Coon tried to say something, but only made a few weak noises.

And Mr. 'Possum looked at Mr. Crow and said:

"What were you doing with my pipe?"

And a little sweat broke out on Mr. Crow's bill, and he opened his mouth as if he were going to say something, but couldn't make a sound.

Then Mr. 'Possum said, in a slow voice, so deep that it seemed to come from down in the ground:

*"Give me my things!"*

And Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow said, very shaky:

"Oh y-yes, Mr. 'Possum, w-we meant to, a-all the t-time."

And they tried to get up, but were so scared and weak they couldn't, and all at once Mr. 'Possum gave a great big laugh and threw off his sheet and sat down on a stool, and rocked and laughed, and Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow realized then that it was Mr. 'Possum himself, and not just his appearance, as they had thought. Then they sat up, and pretty soon began to laugh, too, though not very gaily at first, but feeling more cheerful every minute, because Mr. 'Possum himself seemed to enjoy it so much.

Then Mr. 'Possum told them about everything, and how Mr. Man's medicine must have made him well, for all his pains and sorrows had left him, and he invited them down to help finish up the chicken which had cost him so much suffering.

So then they all went down to the big room and the Crow brought in the big platter of dumplings, and a pan of biscuits and some molasses, and a pot of coffee, and they all sat down and celebrated Mr. 'Possum's recovery. And when they were through, and everything was put away, they smoked, and Mr. 'Possum said he was glad he was there to use his property a little more, and that probably his coat would fit him again now, as his sickness had caused him to lose flesh. He said that Mr. Man's medicine was certainly wonderful; but just then Mr. Rabbit dropped in, and when they told him about it, he said of course the medicine might have had some effect, but that the dumplings and chicken caused the real cure. He said there was an old adage to prove that—one that his thirty-fifth great-grandfather had made for just such a case of this kind. This, Mr. Rabbit said, was the adage:

"If you want to live forever  
Stuff a cold and starve a fever."

Mr. 'Possum's trouble had come from catching cold, he said, so the dumplings were probably just what he needed. Then Mr. Owl dropped in to see how his patient was, and when he saw him sitting up, and smoking, and well, he said it was wonderful how his treatment had worked, and the Hollow Tree people didn't tell him any different, for they didn't like to hurt Mr. Owl's feelings.

## **MR. TURTLE'S FLYING ADVENTURE**

### **MR. TURTLE TELLS ABOUT HIS CHILDHOOD AND EXPLAINS A VERY OLD FABLE**

Once upon a time, when it was early summer in the Big Deep Woods, the Hollow Tree people and Jack Rabbit went over to spend the day with Mr. Turtle, who lives in a very nice stone house which he built himself on the edge of the Wide Blue Water. Mr. Turtle fishes a good deal, and makes most of his living that way, and knows all the best places, so when his friends came he said that perhaps they would enjoy fishing a little—which they could do and sit in a pleasant place at the same time, and talk, and look out over the Wide Blue Water, which was especially blue at this season.

That just suited the Hollow Tree people, for they enjoyed fishing when they had somebody to pick out a good place, and Mr. 'Possum found a nice stump to lean back against, and presently went to sleep, but was waked up soon after, when a big catfish nearly jerked his pole out of his hands. Mr. 'Possum had to use all his strength to pull it out.

Then he was so proud he didn't think about going to sleep again, and told how all his family had been quite smart at catching fish; and pretty soon Jack Rabbit caught a good-sized perch, and Mr. 'Coon hooked a croppie, which got away the first time, though he caught it the next; and Mr. Crow caught a "punkin-seed," which made the others laugh, because it is a funny little fish; while Mr. Turtle just went right along pulling out one kind after another, without saying a word, because fishing is his business and doesn't excite him.

Then by and by the fish stopped biting, as they 'most always do, by spells, and the Deep Woods people leaned back and looked out over the Wide Blue Water, and away out there saw Mr. Eagle swoop down and pick up something which looked at first like a shoe-string; then they saw it wriggle, and knew it was a small water-snake, which was going to be Mr. Eagle's dinner; and they talked about it and wondered how he could enjoy such food.

Mr. Turtle said that Mr. Eagle enjoyed a good many kinds of food, and that he was reminded of an adventure he once had himself with Mr. Eagle, when he (Mr. Turtle, of course) was quite small. Then they all asked Mr. Turtle to tell them his adventure, because they thought it must have been exciting if it was anything like the snake's adventure which they had just witnessed. Mr. Turtle said it was—quite a good deal like it, in some ways—then he said:

"That was the only time I ever flew, or ever had a chance to, or ever wanted to, that I can remember. Very likely you have already heard how once, a long time ago, I thought I could fly, and persuaded an eagle to take me up in the air to give me a start. That old story has been told a good deal, and I believe has even been put into some of Mr. Man's books for his children to read."

Mr. Turtle paused, and the others all said they did remember something of a story of that sort, but never thought it had really happened, because, knowing Mr. Turtle as they did, they didn't believe any of his family would try such an experiment.

"Well," said Mr. Turtle, "it did really happen, though not in the way you have heard. You are right about thinking my family would not care to experiment in that way, and would not do it unless somebody else arranged it for them and gave the experiment a good start."

Mr. Turtle went on to say that in this case it was Mr. Eagle and one of the ancient ancestors of the little water-snake he had just carried off that had started the experiment, though he thought none of it had been really planned.

"I was very small then," Mr. Turtle went on, "about the size of Mr. Man's fist, though I suppose much heavier, for my shell was very thick for my age, and everybody said that if I lived a thousand

years or so I might have a shell as big and thick as the one that Father Storm Turtle, up at the Forks, uses to make the thunder with.<sup>1</sup> Then they would laugh and say that Old Man Moccasin, up at the Drifts, would certainly have trouble with his digestion if he ever caught me; which used to scare my mother, for Old Man Moccasin was the biggest water-snake that anybody ever saw, and there was nobody around the Wide Blue Water that didn't give him room, especially fish-fry, and Mr. Frog, and young turtles like me, and even some older ones. My mother used to warn us children all the time, and scold us every day about going away so far from the house and not keeping a good watch-out for Old Man Moccasin, who would surely get us, she said, unless we were more careful. Then she would tell us to look out for Mr. Eagle, too, who was likely any time to come soaring about, and would pick up any food he saw lying handy.

"Well, it used to scare us when we thought about it. Old Man Moccasin was seven feet long, and I judge about a half a foot thick. He could lift himself two feet out of the water when he was swimming, and with his far-sighted glasses on could see a mile. Mr. Eagle was fully twice as big as any of the Eagle family I know of nowadays, and didn't need any glasses to see an article the size of a bug floating on the Wide Blue Water, no matter how high he was flying. We tried to keep a lookout in several directions, but, of course, as we got older without accidents, we grew careless, and our mother used to count us every night and be surprised that we were all there, and give us a good scolding to go to bed on.

"Nothing happened to any of us for a good while, and then it happened to me. I was the biggest and strongest of our lot, and had the thickest shell, and I liked to show how grown-up I was, and would swim out farther, and make believe I wasn't afraid any more of Mr. Eagle and Old Man Moccasin, which wasn't true, of course, for Mr. Eagle could have handled me with one claw and Old Man Moccasin could have swallowed me like a pill and enjoyed the operation.

"Well, one day I was showing off more than usual and had paddled out farther toward the Drifts, saying to the others that I was going to pay a call on Old Man Moccasin. I kept on farther than I intended, for it was a nice summer day and the water felt good. I didn't know how far I had gone until I turned around to look, and then I didn't think about that any more, for a quarter of a mile away, and between me and the shore, was Old Man Moccasin, coming straight in my direction. He was a good two feet out of the water and had on his far-sighted glasses, and I knew he was after me. He was coming, too. He was swimming with a wide, wavy motion, and making a little curl of white foam in front, and leaving a long trail behind.

"I was so scared, at first, that I couldn't do anything. Then I thought I'd better dive, but I knew that Old Man Moccasin could swim faster under the water than on top of it, and see just as well. I began to paddle for dear life toward the other side of the Wide Blue Water, which was a long way off, with Old Man Moccasin gaining fast. I knew he was bound to overtake me before I got across, and I was getting weaker every minute, from being so scared and trying so hard, and I could hear Old Man Moccasin's steady swimming noise coming closer all the time.

"Of course it wasn't very long until I gave up. I was too worn out to swim another stroke. Old Man Moccasin was only about twenty feet away, and when I looked back at him over my shoulder I saw that he was smiling because he was so sure he had me. It was an awful smile, and I don't like to remember it often, even now, and that was ever so long ago, as much as three hundred and fourteen or fifteen years, this spring.

"Well, when I saw Old Man Moccasin at that close distance, and smiling in that glad way, and his spectacles shining, because he was so pleased at the prospect, I said to myself, I'm gone now, for certain, unless something happens right off; though, of course, I didn't see how anything *could* happen, placed as I was. But just as I said those words, something did happen—and about the last thing I would have expected. The first I saw was a big shadow, and the first I heard was a kind of

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<sup>1</sup> "Mr. Turtle's Thunder Story" in *The Hollow Tree and Deep Woods Book*.



swish in the air, and the first I knew I wasn't in the water any more, but was on the way to the sky with Mr. Eagle, who had one great claw around my hind leg and another hooked over my shell, not seeming to mind my weight at all, and paying no attention to Old Man Moccasin, who was beating his tail on the water and calling Mr. Eagle bad names and threatening him with everything he could think of. I didn't know where I was going, and couldn't see that I was much better off than before, but I did enjoy seeing Old Man Moccasin carry on about losing me, and I called a few things to him that didn't make him feel any better. I said Mr. Eagle and I were good friends, and asked him how he liked the trick we had played on him. I even sang out to him:

"Old Man Moccasin,  
See you by and by;  
Mr. Eagle's teaching me  
How to learn to fly.'

which was a poem, and about the only one I ever made, but it seemed to just come into my head as we went sailing along. Mr. Eagle, he heard it, too, and said:

"Look here,' he said, 'what are you talking about? You don't think you could ever learn to fly, I hope?'

"Why, yes, Mr. Eagle,' I said, 'if I just had somebody like you to give me a few lessons. Of course, nobody could ever fly as well as you can, but I'm sure I could learn to fly some.'

"Then I thanked him for having saved me from Old Man Moccasin, and said how kind he was, and told him how my folks had always told us what a great bird Mr. Eagle was—so strong and grand, and the best flyer in the world—and how we must always admire and respect him and not get in his way, and how I thought if I could only fly a little—perhaps about as much as a hen—I could keep from being caught by Old Man Moccasin, which was the worst thing that could happen, and wouldn't Mr. Eagle please give me a lesson.

"Then Mr. Eagle said, very politely, that he guessed he'd keep me from being caught by Old Man Moccasin, but it wouldn't be by teaching me to fly.

"You couldn't fly any more than a stone,' he said, 'and a stone can't fly at all.'

"But a stone can't swim, either, Mr. Eagle,' I said, 'and I can swim fine. I could learn to swim right through the air—I know I could—I can tell by the way I feel,' and I made some big motions with my front legs, and kicked with my free hind leg to show him how I would do it; and I really did feel, the way that air was blowing past, so fresh and strong, that if he would let go of me I could swim in it a little; anyway.

"But Mr. Eagle laughed, and said:

"You have to have wings to fly with,' he said. 'You couldn't fly a foot. If I should drop you, you'd go down like a shot, and would probably break all to pieces!'

"I was looking down as he spoke, and I noticed that we were passing over Mr. Man's marsh meadows, for we were not flying very high, and I could see locations quite plain, and even some objects. I knew those meadows were soft in places, for I had been there once to a spring overflow picnic. There were also a great number of little hay-piles, which Mr. Man had raked up, getting ready to make his big stacks when the hay was dry. So I said, as quick as I could:

"Oh, Mr. Eagle, I am certain I could fly this minute. I never felt so much like it in my life. Just give me a big swing, Mr. Eagle, and let me try. If I fall and break, it won't be your fault, and you can take the pieces home to your family. I'll be handier for them that way than any other.'

"When Mr. Eagle heard that, he laughed, and said:

"Well, that's so, anyway. You people always are a tough proposition for my young folks. Much obliged for the suggestion.'

"And just as he said that, Mr. Eagle quit flying straight ahead and started to circle around, as if he were looking for something, and pretty soon I saw down there a flat stone, and Mr. Eagle saw it, too, and stopped still in the air right over it, as near as he could judge, making all the time a big flapping sound with his wings, until he got me aimed to suit him, and I could feel him beginning to loosen up his hold on my hind leg and shell. Then, all of a sudden, he let me go.

"Now fly!" he says, and down I went.

"Well, Mr. Eagle certainly told the truth about the way he said I'd drop. I made the biggest kind of swimming motions in the direction of one of those little haycocks, but if I made any headway in that direction I couldn't notice it. I didn't have time, anyway. It seemed to me that I struck bottom almost before I started from the top; still, I must have turned myself over, for I landed on my back, exactly in the center of that flat stone, Mr. Eagle being a center shot.

"He was wrong, though, about me breaking to pieces, and so was the story you've heard. Our family don't break very easy, and as I said before, my shell was thick and tough for my age. It was the stone that broke, and probably saved my life, for if I had hit in a soft place in that marsh meadow I'd have gone down out of sight and never been able to dig out.

"As it was, I bounced some, and landed right side up close to one of those little haycocks, and had just about sense and strength enough left to scrabble under it before Mr. Eagle came swooping down after me, for he saw what had happened and didn't lose any time.

"But he was too late, for I was under that haycock, and Mr. Eagle had never had much practice in pitching hay. He just clawed at it on different sides and abused me as hard as he could for deceiving him, as he called it, and occasionally I called back to him, and tried to soothe him, and told him I was sorry not to come out and thank him in person, but I was so shaken up by the fall that I must rest and collect myself. Then, by and by he pretended to be very sweet, and said I had done so well the first time, I ought to take another lesson, and if I'd come out we'd try it again.

"But I said I couldn't possibly take another lesson to-day, and for him to come back to-morrow, when I had got over the first one; and then I heard him talking to himself and saying it was growing late, and he must be getting home with something to eat for those brats, and pretty soon I heard his big wing sound; but I didn't come out, for I thought he was most likely just trying to fool me, and was sailing around overhead and waiting, which I still think he was, for a while. After a long time, though, I worked over where I could see out a little, and then I found it was night, and, of course, Mr. Eagle had really gone home.

"So then I worked along across the meadows, being pretty sore and especially lame in the left hind leg, where Mr. Eagle had gripped me, though I felt better when I got into the Wide Blue Water and was swimming toward home. It took me all night to get there, and the folks were so worried they couldn't sleep, for some one had seen Old Man Moccasin out in the middle of the water, chasing something, during the afternoon.

"Well, of course I told everything that had happened, and almost everybody in the Wide Blue Water came to hear about it, and they told it to others, and Old Man Moccasin heard so much about how Mr. Eagle had fooled him, and how I had fooled Mr. Eagle, that he moved to another drift, farther down, and probably lives there still. And Mr. Eagle heard so much about the way he tried to teach me to fly that he made up a story of his own and flew in all directions, telling it; and that is the story most people know about to-day and the one that Mr. Man put into his books. But it isn't true, and I can prove it."

Mr. Turtle got up and turned around toward the Hollow Tree people. He had his coat off, and he reached back and pointed to a place about in the center of his shell.

"Feel right there," he said, which Mr. Rabbit did, and said:

"Why, there's quite a lump there. It hardly shows, but you can feel it plainly."

"Yes," said Mr. Turtle, "that's where I struck. It was quite sore for a good while. There was a lump there, at first, as big as an egg. It flattened a good deal afterward, but it never quite went away. Feel how smooth it is. It kept just about as it was when it happened."

Then all those other Deep Woods people came up and felt of the queer lump on Mr. Turtle's back, and said how perfectly that proved everything and how Mr. Turtle always could prove things, and they noticed the inscription about the old race with Mr. Hare, and said in some ways Mr. Turtle was about the most wonderful person anywhere and they were certainly proud to be his friend.

Then Mr. Turtle said they might all sit there and talk about it a little, while he went in to cook the fish and make a pan of biscuits and a nice salad for dinner.

## THE DEEP WOODS ELOPEMENT

### MR. 'POSSUM TELLS ABOUT AUNT MELISSY AND UNCLE SILAS AND THE ROMANCE OF MINTY GLENWOOD

One night in the Hollow Tree, when the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow had finished their supper and were sitting around the fire, smoking, Mr. 'Possum said that he thought he had heard Mr. Frog trying off a few notes to-day, over in the Wide Grasslands, so that he knew that it must be coming spring, and Mr. 'Coon said that over Mr. Man's way he had smelled burning leaves, which was a pretty sure sign. Then Mr. Crow said that some of his wild relatives had been cawing about lately, and that was a sign, too. Then they all smoked some more, and looked in the fire, and were glad that winter was about over, and presently Mr. 'Possum said that every time he smelled the spring smell, and heard the spring sounds, it reminded him of something that happened a long time ago, when he was quite young and lived with his Uncle Silas and Aunt Melissy Lovejoy, over beyond the Wide Blue Water. Then the 'Coon and the Old Black Crow begged Mr. 'Possum to tell about it, because they said Mr. 'Possum's stories always sounded so unbelievable, and yet always turned out to be almost founded on fact.

"Well," said Mr. 'Possum, "you remember I told you about Uncle Silas Lovejoy going to the city, once, and coming home all stylish, with a young man to wait on him, and how Aunt Melissy, when she saw them, turned the young man into just a plain hired help and set them both to work in the garden;<sup>2</sup> and you may remember how I once told you about all our folks, including the hired man, being moved by a balloon across the Wide Blue Water and set down right at the very door of a fine hollow tree, which we moved into and enjoyed for a long time—my little cousins and myself growing up there, and some of them still living there to this day."<sup>3</sup>

Mr. 'Possum stopped to fill his pipe again, and the others all said they remembered, and Mr. 'Coon said he always liked the nice slow and reminding way Mr. 'Possum began his stories, as it brought everything up fresh, and one didn't have to be trying to think of what had happened before, but could just sit back and listen. Mr. 'Possum nodded, and lit his pipe, and leaned back and drew a few puffs, as if he enjoyed them so much that he didn't care to go on with his story. But pretty soon he said:

"We lived there till I grew up, and all my little cousins, too, and the hired man stayed with us. He was a very good young man; though, being brought up in town, of course it took him a little while to get used to country ways. But Aunt Melissy was a stirring person and she didn't let it take as long as it might have in another family. Aunt Melissy was quite primpy herself, and said that she guessed she could carry what style there was in our family (being a Glenwood, and having married beneath her), and that Uncle Silas and the rest of us would do pretty well if we managed to keep up with the work she laid out for us; and that was so.

"She kept Uncle Silas and Winters—that was the name of the hired man—busier than anybody, as she never quite got over the trip to town and the way they came home. She used to set Uncle Silas to peeling potatoes, after supper, for next morning, and would make Winters help my young lady cousin do the dishes, which you would not think he would like; but he did. Aunt Melissy didn't know that he would like it so much, or she would have set him at the potatoes, and Uncle Silas at the dishes.

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<sup>2</sup> *Hollow Tree and Deep Woods Book.*

<sup>3</sup> *Hollow Tree Snowed-In Book.*

"I don't suppose any of you can guess why our hired man wanted to help my cousin, Minta Glenwood Lovejoy, with the dishes. I couldn't, even after I saw that he was so fond of the job, that he could hardly wait until the supper was cleared away and it was ready for him. I used to wonder how that young man, brought up in town, could take so to such work, and then, after a while, I got to wondering why it took him and Minty Glenwood, as we always called her, so long to get through.

"That was the first thing Aunt Melissy wondered, too. She generally knit a little, after supper, and went to sleep over it, and would wake up suddenly and look at the clock and begin to knit as fast as she could, so we would not think she had been asleep. But one night she slept a long time, and when she looked at the clock it was so late that she said, 'Land's sakes, it's bedtime!' and she went over and shook Uncle Silas, who had gone to sleep with a potato in his hand, and scolded him to bed, and shook up the rest of us, and then noticed that Cousin Minty and Winters were missing, and went straight to the kitchen door and opened it, and found them sitting close together, and Winters holding Cousin Minty's hand and telling her that unless she would set up housekeeping with him he would go back to the city and lead a fearful life; and Cousin Minty Lovejoy looking very scared.

"But she didn't look half as scared as she did when she saw Aunt Melissy, nor the hired man, either. He had to make two trials before he could get up, even after Aunt Melissy told him to, and Cousin Minty Glenwood began to cry, and Aunt Melissy told her to go to bed at once, and made a swing at her, and missed her, as she went by. She didn't miss the hired man, though; and I guess he had something else to think of besides Minty Glenwood and housekeeping, for a few minutes, anyway.

"Then Aunt Melissy Lovejoy told him he could take himself out of that house, and not come back except for meals, and she said he could sleep over in the shop, which was an old, leaky, broken stump of a tree where we kept our garden tools. Then I happened to be sitting in the way, and Aunt Melissy tripped over my feet, and when she righted herself she made a swing at me, too; and if I had not dodged in time I might have been injured for life. As it was, she drove me out with Winters to stay in the shop, and I wasn't sorry, for it was an awful time in our house.

"Next morning, Aunt Melissy Lovejoy was still dangerous, and at breakfast she broke out at things in general, and said the idea that she, a Glenwood, should live to see a hired man sitting up to a child of hers, especially one who was a Glenwood herself, resembling the family as she did, and being named that way, too; which seemed worse, somehow, than anything that ever happened to a Glenwood before, except her own case; and she gave an awful look at Uncle Silas, who got a little spunky—the only time I ever saw him that way—and said he thought that Winters was quite a good fellow and would make as good a husband as *he* had, meaning himself, of course, and Aunt Melissy said, 'Yes, just about,' and asked him if he wanted his daughter to have as hard a row to hoe as *she* had, meaning *herself*, though it was Uncle Silas who had the hard hoeing in that family, if I could judge.

"Well, that night in the shop, Winters and I talked it over, and he decided to go away and take Minty Glenwood with him. He might go to the city, he said, to his folks, who had disowned him because he had been quite wild, but very likely would take him back now that he had reformed and was ready to be tamed by a nice little person like Minty Glenwood. He and Minty would have to elope, of course, and he told me to tell her just what to do, because I could get to see her alone, which he couldn't. There was a little sapling grew near the tree, and one of its limbs stuck out above her window. Winters said he would go out on that limb and bend it down, about midnight, and Minty Glenwood could be there and climb out on it, and they would go away together quite a distance from Aunt Melissy, and live happy ever after.

"So I told Cousin Minty Glenwood about the plan, and just what to do, and she was as scared as a chicken, but said she would do anything to save the hired man from that awful city life he had mentioned. She said she knew something would happen when she tried to climb out her window, but she would have to do it, as it was the only way to get out without going through Aunt Melissy's room, which would be much worse.

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