

Paine Albert Bigelow

Making Up with Mr. Dog. Hollow Tree Stories



Albert Paine

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THE HOLLOW TREE INN

THE THREE FRIENDS GO INTO BUSINESS

ONE rainy day when the 'Coon and 'Possum and Old Black Crow, who lived together in three big hollow limbs of a Big Hollow Tree, were rummaging about their house, they found that above each of their rooms was a good deal of room that nobody ever used. That set them to thinking, and pretty soon Mr. 'Possum said it was too bad to let all that good room go to waste, and Mr. 'Coon said yes, it was, and that their house was big enough for a hotel.

Of course he didn't think what he was saying at the time, but it set Mr. Crow to thinking and walking up and down, whistling, and pretty soon he stopped still and looked at the 'Coon and 'Possum.

"I'll do the cookin'," he said, "if you'll get the things to cook."

And right then and there they made up their minds to do it, and early the next morning, while the Old Black Crow was hurrying about inside, getting things ready for business, the 'Coon and the 'Possum nailed up a sign outside, and this is what was on it: —

THE HOLLOW TREE INN

BOARD BY THE DAY OR WEEK

Then they went inside to help Mr. Crow get ready, and by and by they all sat down and waited for people to come. Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum felt pretty well, too, for they thought they would have the easiest time. You see, they had always depended on Mr. Crow a good deal, for, besides being a good cook, he was a great hand to provide, and knew more about where to get the best things, and the best time of day or night to get them, than both of the others put together. So he didn't say anything, but dressed up nice and spruce in a clean apron and cooking cap and leaned out of the window, as cooks always do, with his arms folded. By and by along came Mr. Jack Rabbit.

"Hello!" he said. "What's this?"

Then he read the sign over and looked at Mr. Crow and asked him if it was a joke. And Mr. Crow said: —

"Not much! Come up and see."

So then Mr. Rabbit went up stairs, and Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum showed him through, and Jack Rabbit said that he didn't feel very well this summer, anyway, and he believed he'd just shut up his house and come and board awhile for a change. He said he guessed he'd take the room above Mr. 'Coon's, because it had a nice south window and a tall looking glass, and that he'd pack up a few things that he needed and come over right away. Then he went home and the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow all shook hands and danced around in a circle to think how well they were going to do, for if Mr. Jack Rabbit came they were sure of having as many others as their house would hold.

And while they were dancing, along came Mr. Robin. He read the sign, too, and laughed, and then knocked at the door till Mr. 'Coon came down and let him in. He thought it was a joke at first, like the Rabbit, but when he heard that Jack Rabbit was coming to board he spoke up just as quick as anything and said he'd come, too, and that he'd have his things there before supper time. He took the room over Mr. Crow, because he said he didn't mind the smell of the cooking, and then maybe

he'd learn some new receipts. You see, Mr. Crow and Mr. Robin are sort of kinsfolk, and when they have time they often get together and trace back to find out just what relation they are to each other, and that makes them good friends.

Well, Mr. Robin hadn't more'n got out of the house when who should walk in but Mr. Squirrel.

"What's all this about boarders?" said Mr. Squirrel. "I'm looking for a place to spend a month or two myself."

So then they showed him the room above Mr. 'Possum's, and he was so pleased with the view and everything that he paid a week's board in advance to be sure of keeping anybody else from getting it. When he was gone the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow did another dance, and kept saying over and over how rich they'd be and what they would do with all the money. Then they heard somebody laughing outside, and when they looked out there was Mr. Turtle laughing and reading the sign.

"Hello!" he said. "This isn't the first of April."

"No," said Mr. Crow, "it's a boarding house, and a good one. All the best people in the country stop here. Mr. Rabbit, Mr. Robin, and Mr. Squirrel. Sorry, Mr. Turtle, but our rooms are all full."

Then Mr. Turtle did look cheap, for he thought he couldn't be in the crowd, and it was the very crowd he liked to associate with. But just then Mr. 'Coon happened to think that they might fit up the big room below the other big room where they all gathered to eat and talk, and Mr. Turtle said that would suit him exactly, because he was large and heavy and didn't care much about climbing anyway. So he hurried off after his things, too, and he wasn't out of sight before here comes Mr. Dog!

Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum were both looking out the window when he came up, and they jumped back like lightning. You see, they didn't like Mr. Dog worth a cent. Then Mr. Crow came and looked out the window and talked to him. Mr. Dog was just as polite as a basket of chips, and of course that's the politest thing in the world.

"I've just seen Mr. Robin," said Mr. Dog, "and I came to get a room, too."

"Awfully sorry, Mr. Dog, but our rooms are all full," said Mr. Crow.

"Why don't you take down your sign, then?" said Mr. Dog.

"Hotels never take down their signs," said Mr. Crow.

"Hotels are never too full for one more, either," said Mr. Dog. "If you don't let me come in I think I'll wait around here and make a vacancy."

THE HOLLOW TREE INN **(*Continued*)** **WHAT HAPPENS TO MR. DOG**

NOW, when Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon heard that their hair stood up straight, for they knew very well that there'd be two vacant rooms anyway if Mr. Dog ever got inside, and two if he stayed where he was, for they happened to think that Mr. Rabbit would be coming along presently, and Mr. Squirrel wouldn't be far behind. So they hurried to the back window and looked out, and sure enough, there was Mr. Rabbit coming with his trunk on his shoulder and almost there. At first they were frightened 'most to death for Mr. Rabbit, and then the 'Coon slipped over and whispered to the Crow to keep Mr. Dog talking as hard as he could, so he wouldn't notice anything. All the time he was doing this the 'Possum was motioning to Jack Rabbit to slip up easy-like with his trunk.

So Mr. Rabbit slipped up softly on the other side of the house from Mr. Dog and set his trunk down, and the 'Possum let out a long rope with a hook on it. Jack Rabbit stood up on his trunk and grabbed the hook as soon as he could reach it and hooked it under his arms. Then the 'Coon and the 'Possum pulled and pulled and up he came, and as soon as he was safe they let down the rope and caught the hook in the trunk handle. That was a load for all three of them, and even then they couldn't get it up, and called across to the Crow to come quick and help. So he had to leave Mr. Dog a minute, and when he did that Mr. Dog walked around the tree, and there was the trunk just a few feet from the ground, going up very slowly. That was enough for Mr. Dog. He knew then he'd been fooled, and he was so mad he didn't know what to do.

He took one look at that trunk and made up his mind he wouldn't stand it. So he stepped back a little and made a short run and gave a jump for the trunk, just as high as ever he could.

But Mr. Dog wasn't very lucky, for instead of landing on the trunk he landed his nose right against one corner of it, and that made him madder than ever. He ran and jumped again harder than before, but this time the trunk was a little higher and Mr. Dog didn't quite hit it. There was a strap hanging down, though, and he caught it as he went by. He caught it with his teeth, and two of his teeth went right through two of the holes where the buckle catches, and there they stayed. He had the trunk all right enough, but the trunk had him, too.

There he was. His feet didn't quite touch the ground, and he couldn't get up any higher either. Then all at once the people up stairs saw how it was, and they commenced to laugh in spite of themselves, and hitched the rope around a peg under the sill so they could rest a minute. That was fun for them, but it wasn't for Mr. Dog, by a good deal. He couldn't laugh, and he couldn't rest, either. And just then Mr. Squirrel came with his trunk, and Mr. Robin with his satchel and a hand bag, and Mr. Turtle with his things in a big sack. Mr. 'Coon ran down and let them all in and locked the door. Then he ran back to the window where Mr. Dog was.

"If we'll let you down will you go home and not come around this hotel interfering with our business?" says Mr. 'Possum.

"Yes; will you promise not to try to get any of our guests away from us?" says Mr. 'Coon.

Mr. Dog couldn't talk much in the fix he was in, but he did the best he could, and promised yes to everything, so pretty soon they let the trunk down till his feet touched the ground and he could get his teeth out of the strap. Then he put out for home just about as fast as he could go, without so much as thanking them for letting him down, and up went Mr. Rabbit's trunk pretty quick, now that there were plenty to help.

Then the guests all hurried to their rooms to unpack, and Mr. Crow bustled around to get supper with what he had in the house, for Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon hadn't time yet to bring in anything. It was a pretty good supper, though, and all the guests said so, and said they knew what a good cook

Mr. Crow was if he had things to work with, and the Crow said he guessed he could do his part if the 'Coon and 'Possum would do theirs.

Well, it makes a good deal of difference whether you're company at a house or a boarder. They all felt a good deal like company at first, but by the next evening at supper time they felt different. Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum had been out all day bringing in things, too, and Mr. Crow had been cooking harder than ever. Mr. Robin was first to make remarks. He said the cherries were canned, and not very good at that.

"That's what I said," put in Mr. 'Coon, "but Mr. 'Possum said you wouldn't know the difference."

"Oh, he did, did he?" says Mr. Robin. "Well, I've got better cherries than these at home," and he got up from the table with a disgusted air.

Then Mr. Squirrel picked up some roasted nuts that the Crow had just brought in.

"Where'd you get these nuts?" he says, after he'd cracked one or two of them.

"Down on the slope of Green Bushes," says Mr. 'Coon. "Why, aren't they good ones?"

"I suppose they were once," says Mr. Squirrel – "two or three years ago. Nuts have to be fresh to be good."

"That's what I told him," says Mr. 'Possum, "but he said you wouldn't know the difference."

"Oh, he did, did he?" says Mr. Squirrel. "Well, I've got better nuts than these at home," and Mr. Squirrel *he* got up and left the table.

Then Jack Rabbit began.

"Where'd you get this salad?" he says, turning up his nose.

"Out by Mr. Man's back gate," says Mr. 'Possum. "Why, isn't it good?"

"Might have been once," says Mr. Rabbit. "I s'pose it's some Mr. Man threw out because it was wilted."

"That's what I told him," says Mr. 'Coon, "but he said you wouldn't know the difference."

"Oh, he did, did he? Well, I've got better salad than this at home," and Jack Rabbit *he* got up and he left the table.

And then, pretty soon, Mr. Turtle made a face over the fish because they were salt mackerel and not nice fresh fish, such as he was used to at home. So he got up and left the table, too, and there sat the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow all by themselves and looking cheap enough to fall through the floor. Mr. Crow said it wasn't his fault, and then Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum commenced to blame it on each other, and nearly got into a fight. They were just about to fight when Mr. Crow happened to think of something. Mr. Crow always did think of things.

"I'll tell you!" he says. "We'll just rent rooms."

"Do what?" says Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon together.

"Why, just rent each of our guests his room and let him take his meals out. Then we won't have any work."

"Whoop-ee!" says Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon both together, as loud as ever they could. That made all the guests come running back, and when they heard the new plan they all said it was just the thing.

So then Mr. 'Possum went down and got the sign and brought it up and changed it to read: —

THE HOLLOW TREE INN

FURNISHED ROOMS ONLY

And that was how business began at last in the Hollow Tree.

A DEEP WOODS FISHING PARTY AN ADVENTURE WITH MR. DOG AND A VERY LARGE FISH

ONE warm, still June morning (this, of course, was before the Hollow Tree Inn started) Mr. Jack Rabbit looked out of the window while he was dressing and thought to himself that it would be just the very morning for fish to bite.

Jack Rabbit liked to fish better than anything, almost, so right after breakfast he took an empty tomato can and went out in the back yard and turned over boards till he had the can about half full of bait, with a little dirt thrown on top. Then he reached up under the eaves of the smoke-house and pulled out a long cane pole with a line and hook and floater on it, all rigged up ready, and flung it over his shoulder and started.

Mr. Rabbit walked pretty fast – even lazy folks do that when they go fishing, and Mr. Jack Rabbit wasn't lazy, by a good deal. So pretty soon he came to the Hollow Tree, and there, looking out of an up-stairs window, he saw the 'Coon, the 'Possum, and the Old Black Crow.

"Hello, up there!" he said. "Don't you fellows want to go fishing?"

Mr. 'Possum said he thought fish would bite well on such a morning, and that he'd like to go first rate. Mr. 'Coon said he knew a place where you could pull them out as fast as you could throw in your hook, and he went on and told how he caught a fish there last year that would weigh more than four pounds, and lost him just as he got him to the top of the water. Mr. Crow said he'd always noticed that Mr. 'Coon's four-pound fish never got any nearer to him than the top of the water, and that for his part he didn't care much about fishing. He said, though, that if the 'Coon and the 'Possum wanted to go he'd stay at home and get dinner while they were gone, so's to have it ready when they all came home hungry. He told them that he had some nice canned salmon in the cupboard that he could catch 'most any time, and that if they really wanted fish for dinner he s'posed he might as well open it. Then they all laughed, and in about a minute down came Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum with their fishing things. Jack Rabbit said he had plenty of bait, so away they went. Mr. Crow sat up in the window and watched them off, and Mr. Robin, who happened along just then, laughed and called after them that he'd take a few pounds of nice bass when they got home. The Robin just said that to plague them, of course, and Mr. 'Coon called back that they'd fool him this time, and then he went on to remark that he'd never in his life seen a finer day for fishing.

Jack Rabbit said yes, that it was fine, and that it was a fine day for Mr. Dog to be out gallivanting over the country, too, and that they'd better hurry up and get to the lake and out in his boat before anything happened. That made Mr. 'Possum take a good deal livelier step, though he commenced to whistle and said he wasn't afraid of Mr. Dog, anyway. Mr. 'Coon said he'd always noticed that a fellow mostly whistled when he wasn't afraid, but for his part he couldn't get to that boat any too soon. And pretty soon they did get to it, and Mr. 'Possum was the first one to pile in, though Mr. Dog wasn't anywhere in sight.

Well, they pushed off, and Jack Rabbit took one oar and Mr. 'Coon the other, while the 'Possum sat on the back seat and baited his hook so's to catch the first fish. Then, when they got out to where Mr. 'Coon said the good place was, they all went to fishing, and Mr. 'Possum did get the first bite, but he didn't get anything else when he pulled. Mr. 'Coon told him he pulled too quick, and Jack Rabbit told him he didn't pull quick enough, and asked him if he expected the fish to climb out on his pole. Then Mr. Rabbit had a bite himself, and pulled and didn't get anything, either. Of course, that made Mr. 'Possum laugh, and then, all at once, the 'Coon had a great big bite that took his float away down out of sight the first grab.

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