

Paine Albert Bigelow

The Hollow Tree Snowed-in Book



Albert Paine

The Hollow Tree Snowed-in Book

«Public Domain»

Paine A.

The Hollow Tree Snowed-in Book / A. Paine — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

EXPLANATION OF MAP	5
TO FRIENDS OLD AND NEW	6
THE FIRST SNOWED-IN STORY	7
MR. DOG AT THE CIRCUS	8
THE SECOND SNOWED-IN STORY	12
THE WIDOW CROW'S BOARDING-HOUSE	16
THE FINDING OF THE HOLLOW TREE	19
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	21

Albert Bigelow Paine
The Hollow Tree Snowed-in Book being
a continuation of the stories about the
Hollow Tree and Deep Woods people

EXPLANATION OF MAP

The top of the map is South. This is always so with the Hollow Tree People. The cross on the shelf below the edge of the world (where the ladder is) is where Mr. Dog landed, and the ladder is the one brought by Mr. Man for him to climb back on. The tree that Mr. Man cut down shows too. The spot on the edge of the world is where the Hollow Tree People sometimes sit and hang their feet over, and talk. A good many paths show, but not all by a good deal. The bridge and plank near Mr. Turtle's house lead to the Wide Grass Lands and Big West Hills. The spots along the Foot Race show where Grandpaw Hare stopped, and the one across the fence shows where Mr. Turtle landed. Most of the other things tell what they are, and all the things are a good deal farther apart than they look. Of course there was not room on the map for everything.

TO FRIENDS OLD AND NEW

I WONDER if you have ever heard a story which begins like this: "Once upon a time, in the far depths of the Big Deep Woods, there was a Big Hollow Tree with three hollow branches. In one of these there lived a 'Coon, in another a 'Possum, and in the third a Big Black Crow."

That was the way the first story began in a book which told about the Hollow Tree People and their friends of the Big Deep Woods who used to visit them, and how they all used to sit around the table, or by the fire, in the parlor-room down-stairs, where they kept most of their things, and ate and talked and had good times together, just like folk.¹

And the stories were told to the Little Lady by the Story Teller, and there were pictures made for them by the Artist, and it was all a long time ago – so long ago that the Little Lady has grown to be almost a big lady now, able to read stories for herself, and to write them, too, sometimes.

But the Story Teller and the Artist did not grow any older. The years do not make any difference to them. Like the Hollow Tree People they remain always the same, for though to see them you might think by their faces and the silver glint in their hair that they are older, it would not be so, because these things are only a kind of enchantment, made to deceive, when all the time they are really with the Hollow Tree People in the Big Deep Woods, where years and enchantments do not count. It was only Mr. Dog, because he lived too much with Mr. Man, who grew old and went away to that Far Land of Evening which lies beyond the sunset, taking so many of the Hollow Tree stories with him. We thought these stories were lost for good when Mr. Dog left us, but that was not true, for there came another Mr. Dog – a nephew of our old friend – and he grew up brave and handsome, and learned the ways of the Hollow Tree People, and their stories, and all the old tales which the first Mr. Dog did not tell.

And now, too, there is another Little Lady – almost exactly like the first Little Lady – and it may be that it is this Little Lady, after all, who keeps the Artist and the Story Teller young, for when she thought they might be growing older, and forgetting, she went with them away from the House of Many Windows, in the city, to the House of Low Ceilings and Wide Fireplaces – a queer old house like Mr. Rabbit's – built within the very borders of the Big Deep Woods, where they could be always close to Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum and the Old Black Crow, and all the others, and so learn all the new tales of the Hollow Tree.

¹ *The Hollow Tree and Deep Woods Book*, by the same author and artist.

THE FIRST SNOWED-IN STORY

IN WHICH THE READER LEARNS TO KNOW THE HOLLOW TREE PEOPLE AND THEIR FRIENDS, AND THE LITTLE LADY, AND THE STORY TELLER

NOW this is the beginning of the Hollow Tree stories which the Story Teller told the Little Lady in the queer old house which stands in the very borders of the Big Deep Woods itself. They were told in the Room of the Lowest Ceiling and the Widest Fire – a ceiling so low that when the Story Teller stands upright it brushes his hair as he walks, and a fire so deep that pieces of large trees do not need to be split but can be put on whole. In the old days, several great-grandfathers back, as the Hollow Tree People might say, these heavy sticks were drawn in by a horse that came right through the door and dragged the wood to the wide stone hearth.

It is at the end of New-Year's Day, and the Little Lady has been enjoying her holidays, for Santa Claus found his way down the big stone chimney and left a number of things she wanted. Now, when the night is coming down outside, and when inside there is a heap of blazing logs and a rocking-chair, it is time for the Story Teller. The Story Teller generally smokes and looks into the fire when he tells a Hollow Tree story, because the Hollow Tree People always smoke and look into the fire when *they* tell *their* stories, and the Little Lady likes everything to be "just the same," and the stories must be always told just the same, too. If they are not, she stops the Story Teller and sets him right. So while the Little Woman passes to and fro, putting away the tea-things, the Story Teller lights his pipe, and rocks, and looks into the fire, and holds the Little Lady close, and begins the Tales of the Hollow Tree.

"Once upon a time," he begins —

"Once upon a time," murmurs the Little Lady, settling herself.

"Yes, once upon a time, in the old days of the Hollow Tree, when Mr. Dog had become friends with the 'Coon and the 'Possum and the Old Black Crow who lived in the three hollow branches of the Big Hollow Tree, and used to meet together in their parlor-room down-stairs and invite all their friends, and have good times together, just like folk — "

"But they live there now, don't they?" interrupts the Little Lady, suddenly sitting up, "and still have their friends, just the same?"

"Oh yes, of course, but this was one of the old times, you know."

The Little Lady settles back, satisfied.

"Go on telling, now," she says.

"Well, then, this was one of the times when all the Deep Woods People had been invited to the Hollow Tree for Christmas Day, and were snowed in. Of course they didn't expect to be snowed in. Nobody ever expects to be snowed in till it happens, and then it's too late."

"Was that the Christmas that Mr. Dog played Santa Claus and brought all the presents, and Mr. Squirrel and Mr. Robin and Mr. Turtle and Jack Rabbit came over, and they all sat around the fire and ate things and told nice stories? You said you would tell about that, and you never did."

"I am going to tell it now, as soon as a Little Lady gets real still," says the Story Teller. So then the Little Lady *is* "real still," and he tells the first snowed-in story, which is called:

MR. DOG AT THE CIRCUS

THE HOLLOW TREE PEOPLE LEARN SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT ABOUT SHOWS

THAT was a great Christmas in the Hollow Tree. The 'Coon and the 'Possum and the Old Black Crow had been getting ready for it for a long time, and brought in ever so many nice things to eat, which Mr. Crow had cooked for them, for Mr. Crow is the best cook of anybody in the Big Deep Woods. Then Mr. Dog had brought a lot of good things, too, which he had borrowed from Mr. Man's house, so they had the finest Christmas dinner that you can think of, and plenty for the next day when it would be even better, because chicken and turkey and dressing and such things are always better the next day, and even the *third* day, with gravy, than they are when they are first cooked.

Then, when they were all through and were standing around, smoking their new pipes and looking at each other's new neckties and other Christmas things, Mr. Crow said that he and Mr. Squirrel would clear off the table if the others would get in some wood and stir up the fire and set the room to rights, so they could gather round and be comfortable by-and-by; and then, he said, it might snow as much as it liked as long as they had plenty of wood and things to eat inside.

So then they all skurried around getting on their things to go out after wood – all except Mr. Crow and Mr. Squirrel, who set about clearing off the table and doing up the dishes. And pretty soon Mr. Dog and Mr. 'Coon and the rest were hopping about where the snow was falling so soft and silent among the big, leafless trees, gathering nice pieces of wood and brushing the snow off of them and piling them into the first down-stairs of the Hollow Tree, which the 'Coon and 'Possum and Old Black Crow use for their wood-house and general store-room. It was great fun, and they didn't feel the least bit cold after their warm dinner and with all that brisk exercise.

Mr. Robin didn't help carry the wood in. He was hardly strong enough for that, but he hopped about and looked for good pieces, and when he found one he would call to Mr. 'Coon or Mr. 'Possum, or maybe to one of the others, to throw it on his shoulder and carry it in, and then he would tell whoever it happened to be how strong he was and how fine he looked with that great chunk on his shoulder, and would say that he didn't suppose there was another 'Coon, or 'Possum, or Turtle, or Rabbit, or Dog that could begin to stand up straight under such a chunk as that anywhere outside of a menagerie. Mr. Robin likes to say pleasant things to his friends, and is always popular. And each one tried to carry the biggest load of wood to show how strong he was, and pretty soon they had the lower room of the Hollow Tree piled up high with the finest chunks and kindling pieces to be found anywhere. Then they all hurried up-stairs, stamping the snow off their feet, and gathered around the nice warm fire in the big parlor which was just below the three big hollow branches where the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow had their rooms.

Mr. Crow and Mr. Squirrel were through with the table by this time, and all hands lit their pipes, and looked into the fire, and smoked, and rested, and thought a little before they began talking – thinking, of course, of what a good time they were having, and how comfortable and nice it was to be inside and warm when such a big snow was falling outside.

Mr. 'Possum was the first one to say anything. He said he had been thinking of what Mr. Robin had said about them being outside of a menagerie, and that, come to think about it, he believed he didn't know what a menagerie was, unless it was a new name for a big dinner, as that was the only thing he could think of now that they were outside of, and he said if that was so, and if he could get outside of two menageries, he thought he could carry in a bigger chunk than any two chunks there were down-stairs.

Then all the others laughed a good deal, and Mr. 'Coon said he had thought that perhaps a menagerie was something to wear that would make anybody who had it on very strong, and able to stand up under a big load, and to eat as much as Mr. 'Possum could, or even more.

But Mr. Robin said that it didn't mean either of those things. He said he didn't really know what it did mean himself, but that it must be some kind of a place that had a great many large creatures in it, for he had heard his grandmother quite often call his grandfather the biggest goose outside of a menagerie, though, being very young then, Mr. Robin couldn't remember just what she had meant by it.

Mr. Rabbit said he thought that the word "menagerie" sounded like some kind of a picnic, with swings and nice lively games, and Mr. Crow said that once when he was flying he passed over a place where there was a big sign that said "Menagerie" on it, and that there were some tents and a crowd of people and a great noise, but that he hadn't seen anything that he could carry off without being noticed, so he didn't stop.

Mr. Squirrel thought that from what Mr. Crow said it must be a place where there would be a lot of fine things to see, and Mr. Turtle said that he was a good deal over three hundred years old and had often heard of a menagerie, but that he had never seen one. He said he had always supposed that it was a nice pond of clear water, with a lot of happy turtles and fish and wild geese and duck and such things, in it, and maybe some animals around it, all living happily together, and taken care of by Mr. Man, who brought them a great many good things to eat. He had always thought he would like to live in a menagerie, he said, but that nobody had ever invited him, and he had never happened to come across one in his travels.

Mr. Dog hadn't been saying anything all this time, but he knocked the ashes out of his pipe now, and filled it up fresh and lit it, and cleared his throat, and began to talk. It made him smile, he said, to hear the different ways people thought of a thing they had never seen. He said that Mr. Turtle was the only one who came anywhere near to what a menagerie really was, though of course Mr. Crow *had* seen one on the outside. Then Mr. Dog said:

"I know all about menageries, on the outside and the inside too, for I have been to one. I went once with Mr. Man, though I wasn't really invited to go. In fact, Mr. Man invited me to stay at home, and tried to slip off from me; but I watched which way he went, and took long roundins on him, and slipped in behind him when he went into the tent. He didn't know for a while that I was there, and I wasn't there so very long. But it was plenty long enough – a good deal longer than I'd ever stay again, unless I was tied.

"I never saw so many wild, fierce-looking creatures in my life as there were in that menagerie, and they were just as wild and fierce as they looked. They had a lot of cages full of them and they had some outside of cages, though I don't know why they should leave any of those dangerous animals around where they could damage folks that happened to come in reach, as I did. Those animals outside didn't look as wild and fierce as those in the cages, but they were.

"I kept in the crowd, close behind Mr. Man at first, and nobody knew I was there, but by-and-by he climbed up into a seat to watch some people all dressed up in fancy clothes ride around a ring on horses, which I didn't care much about, so I slipped away, and went over to where there were some things that I wanted to take my time to and see quietly.

"There was an animal about my size and style tied over in one corner of the tent, behind a rope, with a sign in front of him which said, 'The Only Tame Hyena in the World.' He looked smiling and good-natured, and I went over to ask him some questions.

"But that sign wasn't true. He wasn't the least bit tame, and I'm sure now that he wasn't smiling. He grabbed me before I had a chance to say a word, and when I jerked loose, which I did right away, for I didn't want to stir up any fuss there, I left quite a piece of my ear with the tame hyena, and tripped backward over the rope and rolled right in front of a creature called an elephant, about as big as a house and not as useful.

"I suppose they thought *he* was tame, too, but he must have been tamed by the same man, for he grabbed me with a kind of a tail that grew on the end of his nose – a thing a good deal like Mr. 'Possum's tail, only about a million times as big – and I could hear my ribs crack as he waved me up and down.

"Of course, as I say, I didn't want to stir up any fuss, but I couldn't keep still under such treatment as that, and I called right out to Mr. Man, where he sat looking at the fancy people riding, and told him that I had had enough of the show, and if he wanted to take any of me home he ought not to wait very long, but come over that way and see if he couldn't get the tame elephant to practise that performance on the hyena or the next dog, because I had had plenty, and was willing to go home just as I was, all in one piece, even if not very lively.

"Mr. Man *came*, too, and so did a lot of the others. They seemed to think that I was more to look at than those riding people; and some of them laughed, though what there was happening that was funny I have never been able to guess to this day. I kept right on telling Mr. Man what I wanted him to do, and mebbe I made a good deal of noise about it, for it seemed to stir up those other animals. There was a cage full of lions that started the most awful roaring you can think of, and a cage of crazy-looking things they called monkeys that screeched and howled and swung back and forth in rings and held on to the bars, and all the other things joined in, until I couldn't tell whether I was still saying anything or not. I suppose they were all jealous of the elephant because of the fun he was having, and howling to be let out so they could get hold of me too.

"Well, you never heard of such a time. It nearly broke up the show. Everybody ran over to look, and even the riding people stopped their horses to enjoy it, too. If it only hadn't been so dangerous and unpleasant I should have been proud of the way they came to see me perform.

"But Mr. Man didn't seem to like it much. I heard him tell somebody, as loud as he could, that I would be killed, and that I was the best dog he ever had, and that if I *was* killed he'd sue the show.

"That made me proud, too, but I wished he wouldn't wait to sue the show, but would do something right away, and just then a man with a fancy dress on and a stick with a sharp iron hook on it came running up and said something I didn't understand and hit the elephant with the hook end of the stick, and he gave me an extra big swing and crack and flung me half-way across the tent, where I landed on a bunch of hay right in front of a long-necked thing called a camel – another terrible tame creature, I suppose – who had me about half eaten up with his old long under lip, before Mr. Man could get over there.

"When Mr. Man did get hold of me, he said that I'd better take what was left of me home, for they were going to feed the animals pretty soon, and that I would likely get mixed up with the bill of fare.

"After that he took me to the entrance and pushed me outside, and I heard all those fierce creatures in the cages growl and roar louder than ever, as if they had expected to sample me and were sorry to see me go.

"That's what a menagerie is – it's a place where they have all the kinds of animals and things in the world, for show, and a good many birds, and maybe turtles, too, but they don't have any fine clear pond. They have just a big tent, like the one Mr. Crow saw, and a lot of cages inside. They keep most of the animals in cages, and they ought to keep them all there, and I don't think they feed them very much, nor the best things, or they wouldn't look so fierce and hungry.

"They just keep them for Mr. Man and his friends to look at and talk about, and if Mr. Turtle will take my advice he will keep out of a menagerie and live in the Wide Blue Water where he was born. I wouldn't have gone there again unless I had been tied and dragged there, or unless they had put those tame animals into cages with the others. No doubt there are some very fine, strong animals in a menagerie, but they wouldn't be there if they could help it, and if anybody ever invites any of you to join a menagerie, take my advice and don't do it."

Then Mr. Dog knocked the ashes out of his pipe again, and all the other Deep Woods People knocked the ashes out of *their* pipes, too, and filled them up fresh, and one said one thing, and one said another about being in a menagerie or out of it, and every one thought it would be a terrible thing to be shut up in a cage, except Mr. 'Possum, who said he wouldn't mind it if they would let him sleep enough and give him all he could eat, but that a cage without those things would be a lonesome place.

Then Mr. 'Coon said that a little adventure had happened to him once which he had never mentioned before, because he had never known just what to make of it; but he knew now, he said, that he had come very near getting into a menagerie, and he would tell them just what happened.

The Story Teller looked down at the quiet figure in his lap. The Little Lady's head was nestled close to his shoulder, and her eyes were straining very hard to keep open.

"I think we will save Mr. 'Coon's story till another night," he said.

THE SECOND SNOWED-IN STORY

MR. 'COON TELLS HOW HE CAME NEAR BEING A PART OF A MENAGERIE, AND HOW HE ONCE TOLD A STORY TO MR. DOG

"YOU can tell about Mr. 'Coon, now – the story you didn't tell last night, you know," and the Little Lady wriggles herself into a comfortable corner just below the Story Teller's smoke, and looks deep into a great cavern of glowing embers between the big old andirons, where, in her fancy, she can picture the Hollow Tree people and their friends.

"Why, yes, let me see – " says the Story Teller.

"Mr. Dog had just told about being at the menagerie, you know, and Mr. 'Coon was just going to tell how he came very near getting into a menagerie himself."

"Oh yes, of course – well, then, all the Hollow Tree people, the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow, and their friends who were visiting them – Mr. Dog and Mr. Robin and Jack Rabbit and Mr. Turtle and Mr. Squirrel – knocked the ashes out of their pipes and filled them up fresh – "

"No, they had just done that."

"That's so, I forgot. Well, anyway, as soon as they got to smoking and settled back around the fire again Mr. 'Coon told them his story, and I guess we'll call it

MR. 'COON'S EARLY ADVENTURE

Mr. 'Coon said he was quite young when it happened, and was taking a pleasant walk one evening, to think over things a little, and perhaps to pick out a handy tree where Mr. Man's chickens roosted, when all at once he heard a fierce bark close behind him, and he barely had time to get up a tree himself when a strange and very noisy Mr. Dog was leaping about at the foot of the tree, making a great fuss, and calling every moment for Mr. Man to hurry, for he had a young 'coon treed.

"Of course I laid pretty low when I heard that," Mr. 'Coon said, "for I knew that Mr. Man would most likely have a gun, so I got into a bunch of leaves and brush that must have been some kind of an old nest and scrooched down so that none of me would show.

"Then by-and-by I heard some big creature come running through the brush, and I peeked over a little, and there, sure enough, was Mr. Man with a long gun, and I noticed that he wore a thing on his head – a sort of hat, I suppose – made of what looked to be the skin of some relative of mine.

"Of course that made me mad. I hadn't cared so much until I saw that; but I said right then to myself that any one who would do such a thing as that never could be a friend of mine, no matter how much he tried. So I scrooched down and laid low in that old nest, and didn't move or let on in any way that I was there.

"Then I heard Mr. Man walking around the tree and talking to his dog and telling him that there wasn't anything up in that tree at all, and that Mr. Dog had just been fooling him. I could tell by his voice that he was getting mad at Mr. Dog, and I hoped that he'd get mad enough pretty soon to take a stick to him for chasing me up a tree like that, and then calling for Mr. Man to come and see me when there wasn't really anything to look at.

"But Mr. Dog kept galloping around the tree and barking out, over and over, that I was there; that he had seen me, and that he knew that I was hiding up there somewhere; and pretty soon I heard Mr. Man going away, and I peeked over again.

"Sure enough, he was going, but Mr. Dog was staying right there, sitting under the tree and looking up and making a good deal more noise than there was any need of to let me know he hadn't gone. I didn't see why he stayed there. I wished he'd go away and tend to his own business.

"Being quite young, I still lived with my folks over near the Wide Grass Lands, and I wanted to get home for supper. It was a good way to go, for the tree I had climbed was over close to the edge of the world where the sun and moon rise, and you all know that's a good way, even from here.

"Well, he didn't go, but just sat there, barking up that tree, and after a long time I heard somebody coming again, and I peeked over and there was Mr. Man, hurrying back, this time with an axe. I knew, right then, there was going to be trouble. I knew they were going to cut that tree down, and that I should most likely have quite a fuss with Mr. Dog, and perhaps go home with a black eye and a scratched nose, and then get whipped again for fighting, after I got there."

Mr. 'Coon stopped and knocked the ashes out of his pipe and filled it up fresh, and all the others knocked the ashes out of their pipes and filled them up fresh, too. Then Mr. 'Possum poked up the fire and told Mr. Turtle to bring a stick of wood from down-stairs, and when it was blazing up high and bright again they all stepped over to the window a minute, to see how hard it was snowing and banking up outside, then went back to their chairs around the fire, and stretched out their feet and leaned back and smoked, and listened to the rest of Mr. 'Coon's story.

Mr. 'Coon said he didn't like the sound of that axe when Mr. Man began to cut the tree down.

"Every time he struck the tree I could feel it all through me," he said, "and I knew if he kept that noise up long enough it would give me a nervous headache. I wished the tree would hurry up and drop, so we could have what muss we were going to, and get it over with. I'd have got out of that old nest and made a jump for another tree if there had been any near enough, but there wasn't, so I just laid low and gritted my teeth and let him chop.

"Well, by-and-by that tree began to go down. It seemed to teeter a little at first, this way and that; then it went very slow in one direction; then it went a little faster; then it went a good deal faster; then I suddenly felt like a shooting-star, I came down so fast, and there was a big crash, and I thought I had turned into a lot of stars, sure enough, and was shooting in every direction, and the next I knew I was tied to a tree, hand and foot and around the middle, and Mr. Man and Mr. Dog were sitting and looking at me, and grinning, and talking about what they were going to do.

"Mr. Man wasn't scolding Mr. Dog any more. He was telling him what a good thing it was they had caught me alive, for now they could sell me to a show and get a great deal more for me than they could for my skin. I didn't know what a show was, then, or that a show is a menagerie, but I know now, and I can see just what they meant.

"Pretty soon Mr. Man told Mr. Dog to stay there and watch me while he went home after a box to put me in. He said he didn't think it would be safe to carry me in his arms, and he was right about that.

"So then Mr. Man walked off, and left Mr. Dog guarding me, and saying unpleasant things to me now and then.

"At first I wouldn't answer him; but pretty soon I happened to think of something pleasant to say:

"'Mr. Dog,' I said, 'I know a good story, if you'd like me to tell it. Mr. Man may be a good while getting that box, and mebbe you'd like to hear something to pass the time.'

"Mr. Dog said he would. He said that Mr. Man would most likely have to make the box, and he didn't suppose he knew where the hammer and nails were, and it might be dark before Mr. Man got back.

"I felt a good deal better when I heard Mr. Dog say that, and I told him a story I knew about how Mr. Rabbit lost his tail, and Mr. Dog laughed and seemed to like it, and said, 'Tell me another.'"

Before Mr. 'Coon could go on with his story, Mr. Rabbit said that of course if that old tale had helped Mr. 'Coon out of trouble he was very glad, but that it wasn't at all true, and that some time *he* would tell them himself the true story of how it happened.

Then they all said that they hoped he would, for they'd always wanted to hear that story told right, and then Mr. 'Coon went on with his adventure.

Mr. 'Coon said that when Mr. Dog said, "Tell me another," he knew he was in a good-humor, and that he felt better and better himself. "I thought if Mr. Man didn't come back too soon," he said, "I might get along pretty well with Mr. Dog.

"I know another story, Mr. Dog," I said – 'the funniest story there is. It would make you laugh until you fell over the edge of the world, but I can't tell it here.'

"Why," he said – 'why can't you tell it here as well as anywhere?'

"Because it has to be acted," I said, 'and my hands are tied.'

"Will you tell it if I untie your hands?" said Mr. Dog.

"Well," I said, 'I'll begin it, and you can see how it goes.'

"So Mr. Dog came over and untied my hands, for he said he could tie them again before Mr. Man came back, because he knew Mr. Man hadn't found that hammer yet.

"You can't get loose with just your hands untied, can you?" he said.

"No, of course not, Mr. Dog," I said, pleasant and polite as could be.

"Let's see you try," said Mr. Dog.

"So I twisted and pulled, and of course I couldn't get loose.

"Now tell the story," said Mr. Dog.

"So I said: 'Once there was a man who had a very bad pain in his chest, and he took all kinds of medicine, and it didn't do him any good. And one day the Old Wise Man of the Woods told him if he would rub his chest with one hand and pat his head with the other, it might draw the pain out the top and cure him. So the man with the pain in his chest tried it, and he did it this way.'

"Then I showed Mr. Dog just how he did it, and Mr. Dog thought that was funny, and laughed a good deal.

"Go on and tell the rest of it," he said. 'What happened after that?'

"But I let on as if I'd just remembered something, and I said, 'Oh, Mr. Dog, I'm *so* sorry, but I can't tell the rest of that story here, and it's the funniest part, too. I know you'd laugh till you rolled over the edge of the world.'

"Why can't you tell the rest of that story here as well as anywhere?" said Mr. Dog, looking anxious.

"Because it has to be acted with the feet," I said, 'and my feet are tied.'

"Will you tell it if I untie your feet?" said Mr. Dog.

"Well, I'll do the best I can," I said.

"So Mr. Dog came over and untied my feet. He said he knew that Mr. Man hadn't found the nails or the pieces to make the box yet, and there would be plenty of time to tie me again before Mr. Man got back.

"You can't get loose, anyway, with just your hands and feet untied, can you?" he said.

"No, of course not, Mr. Dog," I said, more pleasant and polite than ever.

"Let's see you try," said Mr. Dog.

"So I squirmed and twisted, but of course with a strong string around my waist and tied behind I couldn't do anything.

"Now go on with the story," said Mr. Dog.

"Well," I said, 'the pain left his chest, but it went into his back, and he had a most terrible time, until one day the Old Wise Man of the Woods came along and told him that he thought he ought to know enough by this time to rub his back where the pain was and pat his head at the same time to draw it out at the top. So then the man with the pain rubbed his back and patted his head this way,'

and I showed Mr. Dog how he did it; and I rubbed a good while about where the knot was, and made a face to show how the man with the pain looked, and then I said the pain came back into his chest again instead of being drawn out at the top; and I changed about and rubbed there awhile, and then I went around to my back again, chasing that pain first one side and the other; and then I said that the Old Wise Man of the Woods came along one day and told him that he must kick with his feet too if he ever wanted to get rid of that pain, because, after all, it might have to be kicked out at the bottom; and when I began to kick and dance with both feet and to rub with my hands at the same time, Mr. Dog gave a great big laugh – the biggest laugh I ever heard anybody give – and fell right down and rolled over and over, and did roll off the edge of the world, sure enough.

"I heard him go clattering into a lot of brush and blackberry bushes that are down there, and just then I got that back knot untied, and I stepped over and looked down at Mr. Dog, who had lodged in a brier patch on a shelf about ten feet below the edge, where Mr. Man would have to get him up with a ladder or a rope.

"Do you want to hear the rest of the story, Mr. Dog?" I said.

"I'll story *you*," he said, "when I catch you!"

"I told you you'd laugh till you fell off the edge of the world," I said.

"I'll make *you* laugh," he said, "when I catch you!"

"Then I saw he was cross about something, and I set out for home without waiting to say good-bye to Mr. Man, for I didn't want to waste any more time, though I missed my supper and got a scolding besides.

"But I was glad I didn't bring home a black eye and scratched nose, and I'm more glad than ever now that Mr. Man didn't get back in time with that box, or I might be in a menagerie this minute instead of sitting here smoking and telling stories and having a good time on Christmas Day."

The Story Teller looks down at the Little Lady.

"I'm glad Mr. 'Coon didn't get into the menagerie, aren't you?" she says.

"Very glad," says the Story Teller.

"He went lickety-split home, didn't he?"

"He did that!"

"I like them to go lickety-split better than lickety-cut, don't you?" says the Little Lady. "They seem to go so much faster."

"Ever so much faster," says the Story Teller.

THE WIDOW CROW'S BOARDING-HOUSE

EARLY DOINGS OF THE HOLLOW TREE PEOPLE AND HOW THEY FOUND A HOME

ANYBODY can tell by her face that the Little Lady has some plan of her own when the Story Teller is ready next evening to "sit by the fire and spin."

"I want you to tell me," she says, climbing up into her place, "how the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow ever got to living together in the Hollow Tree."

That frightens the Story Teller. He is all ready with something different.

"Good gracious!" he says, "that is an old story that all the Deep Woods People have known ever so long."

"But I don't know it," says the Little Lady, "and I'd like to know that before you tell anything else. Rock, and tell it."

So the Story Teller rocks slowly, and smokes, and almost forgets the Little Lady in remembering that far-away time, and presently he begins.

Well, it was all so long ago that perhaps I can't remember it very well. Mr. 'Possum was a young man in those days – a nice spry young fellow; and he used to think it was a good deal of fun to let Mr. Dog – who wasn't friendly then, of course – try to catch him; and when Mr. Dog would get pretty close and come panting up behind him, Mr. 'Possum would scramble up a tree, and run out on to the longest limb and swing from it, head down, and laugh, and say:

"Come right up, Mr. Dog! Always at home to you, Mr. Dog! Don't stop to knock!"

And then Mr. Dog would race around under the tree and make a great to do, and sometimes Mr. 'Possum would swing back and forth, and pretty soon give a great big swing and let go, and Mr. Dog would think surely he had him then, and bark and run to the place where he thought he was going to drop. Only Mr. 'Possum didn't drop – not far; for he had his limb all picked out, and he would catch it with his tail as he went by, and it would bend and sway with him, and he would laugh, and call again:

"Don't go, Mr. Dog! Mr. Man can get up the cows alone to-night!"

And then Mr. Dog would remember that he was a good ways from home, and that if he wasn't there in time to help Mr. Man get up the cows there might be trouble; and he would set out lickety-split for home, with Mr. 'Possum calling to him as he ran.

But one time Mr. 'Possum made a mistake. He didn't know it, but he was getting older and a good deal fatter than he had been at first, and when he swung out for another limb that way, and let go, he missed the limb and came clattering down right in front of Mr. Dog. He wasn't hurt much, for the ground was soft, and there was a nice thick bed of leaves; but I tell you he was scared, and when Mr. Dog jumped right on top of him, and grabbed him, he gave himself up for lost, sure enough.

But Mr. 'Possum is smart in some ways, and he knows how to play "dead" better than any other animal there is. He knew that Mr. Dog would want to show him to Mr. Man, and that he was too heavy for Mr. Dog to carry. He had thought about all that, and decided what to do just in that little second between the limb and the ground, for Mr. 'Possum can think quick enough when anything like that happens.

So when he struck the ground he just gave one little kick with his hind foot and a kind of a sigh, as if he was drawing his last breath, and laid there: and even when Mr. Dog grabbed him and shook him he never let on, but acted almost deader than if he had been really dead and no mistake.

Then Mr. Dog stood with his paws out and his nose down close, listening, and barking once in a while, and thinking maybe he would come to pretty soon, but Mr. 'Possum still never let on, or breathed the least little bit, and directly Mr. Dog started to drag him toward Mr. Man's house.

That was a hard job, and every little way Mr. Dog would stop and shake Mr. 'Possum and bark and listen to see if he was really dead, and after a while he decided that he was, and started to get Mr. Man to come and fetch Mr. 'Possum home. But he only went a few steps, the first time, and just as Mr. 'Possum was about to jump up and run he came hurrying back, and stood over him and barked and barked as loud as ever he could for Mr. Man to come and see what he had for him. But Mr. Man was too far away, and even if he heard Mr. Dog he didn't think it worth while to come.

So then Mr. Dog tried to get Mr. 'Possum on his shoulder, to carry him that way; but Mr. 'Possum made himself so limp and loose and heavy that every time Mr. Dog would get him nearly up he would slide off again and fall all in a heap on the leaves; and Mr. Dog couldn't help believing that he was dead, to see him lying there all doubled up, just as he happened to drop.

So, then, by-and-by Mr. Dog really did start for Mr. Man's, and Mr. 'Possum lay still, and just opened one eye the least bit to see how far Mr. Dog had gone, and when he had gone far enough Mr. 'Possum jumped up quick as a wink and scampered up a tree, and ran out on a limb and swung with his head down, and called out:

"Don't go away, Mr. Dog! We've had such a nice visit together! Don't go off mad, Mr. Dog! Come back and stay till the cows come home!"

Then Mr. Dog was mad, I *tell* you, and told him what he'd do next time; and he set out for home fast as he could travel, and went in the back way and hid, for Mr. Man was already getting up the cows when he got there.

Well, Mr. 'Possum didn't try that swinging trick on Mr. Dog any more. He found out that it was dangerous, the way he was getting, and that made him think he ought to change his habits in other ways too. For one thing, he decided he ought to have some regular place to stay where he could eat and sleep and feel at home, instead of just travelling about and putting up for the night wherever he happened to be.

Mr. 'Possum was always quite stylish, too, and had a good many nice clothes, and it wasn't good for them to be packed about all the time; and once some of his best things got rained on and he had to sleep on them for a long time to get them pressed out smooth again.

So Mr. 'Possum made up his mind to find a home. He was an old bachelor and never wanted to be anything else, because he liked to have his own way, and go out all times of the night, and sleep late if he wanted to. So he made up his mind to look up a good place to board – some place that would be like a home to him – perhaps in a private family.

One day when he was walking through the woods thinking about it, and wondering how he ought to begin to find a place like that, he met Mr. Z. 'Coon, who was one of his oldest friends in the Big Deep Woods. They had often been hunting together, especially nights, for Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum always like that time best for hunting, and have better luck in the dark than any other time. Mr. 'Coon had had his troubles with Mr. Dog, too, and had come very near getting caught one night when Mr. Man and some of his friends were out with Mr. Dog and his relatives and several guns looking for a good Sunday dinner. Mr. 'Coon *would* have got caught that time, only when Mr. Man cut the tree down that he was in he gave a big jump as the tree was falling and landed in another tree, and then ran out on a limb and jumped to another tree that wasn't so far away, and then to another, so that Mr. Man and his friends and all the dog family lost track of him entirely.

But Mr. 'Coon was tired of that kind of thing too, and wanted some place where he could be comfortable, and where he could lock the door nights and feel safe. Mr. 'Coon was a bachelor, like Mr. 'Possum, though he had once been disappointed in love, and told about it sometimes, and looked sad, and even shed tears.

So when he met Mr. 'Possum that day they walked along and talked about finding a place to live, and just as they were wondering what they ought to do they happened to notice, right in front of them, a little piece of birch bark tacked up on a tree, and when they read it, it said:

MRS. WIDOW CROW

WILL TAKE A FEW GUESTS

SINGLE GENTLEMEN PREFERRED;

PLEASANT LOCATION NEAR

RACE-TRACK

Then Mr. 'Possum scratched his head and tried to think, and Mr. 'Coon scratched *his* head and tried to think, and pretty soon Mr. 'Coon said:

"Oh yes, I know about that. That's Mr. Crow's mother-in-law. He had a wife until last year, and his mother-in-law used to live with them. I believe she was pretty cross, but I've heard Mr. Crow say she was a good cook, and that he had learned to cook a great many things himself. I heard some time ago that she had moved over by the race-track, and perhaps Mr. Crow is boarding with her. Let's go over and see."

So away they went, saying how nice it would be to be really settled, and pretty soon they got over to Mrs. Widow Crow's, and there, sure enough, they saw Mr. Crow out in the yard cutting wood for his mother-in-law; and when they asked him about the advertisement, he said he was helping her to get started, and she had two nice rooms, and that Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon would be just the ones to fill them.

So they went right in and saw Mrs. Widow Crow about it, and by night they had their things moved and were all settled, and Widow Crow got a nice supper for them, and Mr. Crow helped her, and worked as hard as if he were a hired man instead of a boarder like the others, which he was, because he paid for his room as much as anybody, and got scolded besides when he didn't do things to suit his mother-in-law.

THE FINDING OF THE HOLLOW TREE

HOW THE 'COON AND 'POSSUM AND THE OLD BLACK CROW MOVED AND SET UP HOUSEKEEPING

WELL, the Widow Crow set a very good table, and everything in her boarding-house went along quite well for a while, and Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon both said what a good thing it was to have a home, and Mr. Crow said so too, though he didn't look as if he enjoyed it as much as he said, for his mother-in-law kept him so busy cutting and carrying wood and helping her with the cooking that he never had any time for himself at all.

Even when Mr. Rabbit and some of his friends had the great fall handicap race he had to stay at home and peel potatoes, and not see it, besides being scolded all the time for wanting to go to such a thing as a rabbit race anyway. And Mr. Crow was sad because it reminded him of his married life, which he was trying to forget – Mrs. Crow having been the image of his mother-in-law and exactly like her about races and peeling potatoes and such things.

And by-and-by, Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon didn't like it so much, either. Widow Crow got so she scolded them, too, about their habits, especially about being out nights and lying in bed next morning, and she wouldn't give them any breakfast unless they got up in time.

At last she even asked them to take care of their own rooms and to do other work, the same as Mr. Crow did; and she didn't cook as good things, nor as many of them, as she did when they first came. Then one day when they complained a little – not very much, for they were afraid of the Widow Crow, but a little – she told them that if they didn't like what she gave them they could find a place they liked better, and that she was tired of their ways anyhow.

So then Mr. Crow and Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum all got together and talked it over. And Mr. Crow said *they* might be pretty tired of it, but that they couldn't in a hundred years, thinking night and day, think how tired of it *he* was. He said if they would just say the word he would take the things that belonged to him out of that house, and the three of them would find some good place and all live together, and never have anything more to do with mothers-in-law or their families. He said he knew how to cook as pleasant place and wasn't henpecked to death.

And he said if they moved his things they had better do it at night while his mother-in-law was asleep, so as not to disturb her.

Well, Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon both spoke right up and said *they'd* go in a minute, and that they'd hunt up the place to live that very day, though it wasn't the best time of year to move. And Mr. Crow said:

"I know where there's a big Hollow Tree that would be *just* the place. It's the biggest tree in the Big Deep Woods. It has three big hollow branches that would do for rooms, and with a little work it could be made into the finest place anywhere. The Old Wise Man of the Woods once lived there and fixed it all up with nice stairs, and a fireplace, and windows, and doors with good latches on them, and it's still just as he left it. All it needs are a few repairs, and we could move right in. I found it once as I was flying over, and I could tell *you*, so you could find it. It's in a thick swampy place, and you would never guess it was there if you didn't know it. Mr. Dog knows about it, but he never could get in if we kept the door latched, and it's not so far away from Mr. Man's that we could not borrow, when we ran out of little things we needed."

Well, Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon took the directions from Mr. Crow, and went right off to look at the Hollow Tree that very day, and decided they'd take it, and pitched in to clean it up and get it ready to live in. And next day they came with a hammer and some nails and worked all day again,

and Mr. Rabbit heard the noise and came over and looked through the place and said how nice it was; and they were so tired at night that they never thought of going out, and were up early for breakfast.

Widow Crow was so surprised she forgot what she had always scolded them for before, and scolded them this time for getting up so early that they had to stand around and wait for breakfast to be put on the table. But they didn't seem to mind the scolding at all, and Mr. Crow looked happier than he had looked for months, and skipped around and helped set the table, and brought in a big wood-box full of wood, and when Widow Crow scolded him for getting chips on the floor he laughed. Then she boxed his ears and told him he ought to remember the poor Missing One at such a time, and Mr. Crow said he did, and could almost imagine she was there now.

Well, Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum got the Hollow Tree all ready, that day, and that night they moved.

The Widow Crow was pretty fat, and liked to go to bed early, and sleep sound, and leave Mr. Crow to do the evening dishes; and that evening Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum pitched in and helped him, and they got through in a jiffy and began to move.

Mr. Crow said he knew his own things, and that he wouldn't take any that belonged to the Missing One, because they had mostly come from her mother; and, besides, they would be a sad reminder, and didn't seem to go with the kind of a place they had planned to have. He said if they didn't have enough things they could borrow a few from Mr. Man when Mr. Man went away and left his windows open, and that they wouldn't need much to begin with.

So then they got Mr. Crow's cook-stove out of the back store-room, and a table that was his, and some chairs from different parts of the house, and a few dishes which had come to him from his side of the family, and they tiptoed around and listened now and then at Widow Crow's door to be sure she was asleep.

They knew she *was* by the sound; but still they were very quiet until Mr. 'Possum started to bring a rocking-chair of Mr. Crow's down-stairs and somehow got his legs through the rounds and fell and rolled clear to the bottom, expressing his feelings as he came down.

That woke up Widow Crow with a jump, and she sat up in bed and called "Thieves!" and "Help!" and Mr. Crow ran to her door and said that it wasn't anything, only those scamps Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon had been out late again. He said they had brought home one of Mr. Man's beehives and had dropped it because the bees woke up just as they were climbing the stairs.

Then Mrs. Crow called out quick, and said for him not to dare to open that door and let those pesky bees into her room, and that she hoped they'd sting that 'Possum and 'Coon until they wouldn't be able to tell themselves apart. She said she bet she'd get that pair out of her house if she lived through the night. Then she rolled over and went to sleep again, and Mr. 'Possum got up and limped a little, but wasn't much damaged, and they got all the things outside and loaded up, and set out for the Hollow Tree.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.