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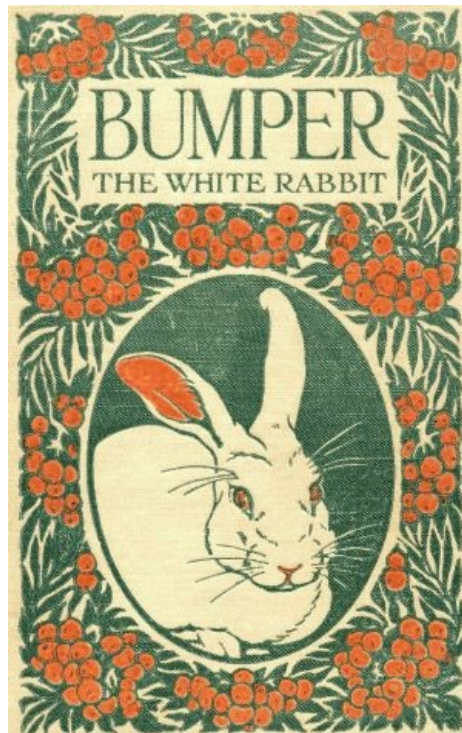
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BUMPER THE WHITE RABBIT ***



Twilight Animal Series

BUMPER THE WHITE RABBIT

By

GEORGE ETHELBERT WALSH

*Author of "Bumper the White Rabbit," "Bumper the White Rabbit
in the*

*Woods," "Bumper the White Rabbit and His Foes," "Bumper the
White Rabbit and His Friends," "Bobby Gray Squirrel,"
"Bobby Gray Squirrel's Adventures," Etc.*

Colored Illustrations by

THE JOHN C. WINSTON COMPANY
CHICAGO PHILADELPHIA TORONTO



Not until it approached very close did he
duck his head and look up

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NOT UNTIL IT APPROACHED VERY CLOSE DID HE DUCK HIS

HE COULDN'T BELIEVE IT WAS ANYTHING BUT A MAGIC
CARROT

[40](#)

THEY TRIED TO LAND ON HIS BACK AND CLAW HIM

[65](#)

TWILIGHT ANIMAL SERIES
FOR BOYS AND GIRLS
FROM 4 TO 10 YEARS OF AGE

By
GEORGE ETHELBERT WALSH

LIST OF TITLES

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- 2 BUMPER THE WHITE RABBIT IN THE WOODS
- 3 BUMPER THE WHITE RABBIT AND HIS FOES
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- 5 BOBBY GRAY SQUIRREL
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(Other titles in preparation)

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INTRODUCTION TO THE
TWILIGHT ANIMAL STORIES

BY THE AUTHOR

All little boys and girls who love animals should become acquainted with Bumper the white rabbit, with Bobby Gray Squirrel, with Buster the bear, and with White Tail the deer, for they are all a jolly lot, brave and fearless in danger, and so lovable that you won't lay down any one of the books without saying wistfully, "I almost wish I had them really and truly as friends and not just storybook acquaintances." That, of course, is a splendid wish; but none of us could afford to have a big menagerie of wild animals, and that's just what you would have to do if you went outside of the books. Bumper had many friends, such as Mr. Blind Rabbit, Fuzzy Wuzz and Goggle Eyes, his country cousins; and Bobby Gray Squirrel had his near cousins, Stripe the chipmunk and Webb the flying squirrel; while Buster and White Tail were favored with an endless number of friends and relatives. If we turned them all loose from the books, and put them in a ten-acre lot—but no, ten acres wouldn't be big enough to accommodate them, perhaps not a hundred acres.

So we will leave them just where they are—in the books—and read about them, and let our imaginations take us to them where we can see them playing, skipping, singing, and sometimes fighting, and if we read very carefully, and *think* as we go along, we may come to know them even better than if we went out hunting for them.

Another thing we should remember. By leaving them in the books, hundreds and thousands of other boys and girls can enjoy them, too, sharing with us the pleasures of the imagination, which after all is one of the greatest things in the world. In gathering them together in a real menagerie, we would be selfish both to Bumper, Bobby, Buster, White Tail and their friends as well as to thousands of other little readers who could not share them with us. So these books of

Twilight Animal Stories are dedicated to all little boys and girls who love wild animals. All others are forbidden to read them! They wouldn't understand them if they did.

So come out into the woods with me, and let us listen and watch, and I promise you it will be worth while.

Bumper the White Rabbit

STORY I WHERE BUMPER CAME FROM

[Pg 9]

There was once an old woman who had so many rabbits that she hardly knew what to do. They ate her out of house and home, and kept the cupboard so bare she often had to go to bed hungry. But none of the rabbits suffered this way. They all had their supper, and their breakfast, too, even if there wasn't a crust left in the old woman's cupboard.

There were big rabbits and little rabbits; lean ones and fat ones; comical little youngsters who played pranks upon their elders, and staid, serious old ones who never laughed or smiled the livelong day; boy rabbits and girl rabbits, mother rabbits and father rabbits, and goodness knows how many aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, cousins, second cousins and distant relatives-in-law! They all lived under one big roof in the backyard of the good old woman who kept them, and they had such jolly times together that it seemed a shame to separate them.

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But once every day the old woman chose several of her pets, and carried them away in a basket to a certain street corner of the city where she offered them for sale. She was dreadfully poor, and often when she returned home at night, counting her money, she would murmur: "It's a cabbage for them or a loaf of bread for myself. I can't get both."

She didn't always get the loaf of bread, but the rabbits always had their cabbage. They were all pink-eyed, white rabbits, and people were willing to pay good prices for them. But the whitest and pinkest-eyed of them all was Bumper, a tiny rabbit when he was born, and not very big when the old woman took him away on his first trip to the street corner. Bumper had never seen so many people before, and he was a little shy and frightened at first; but Jimsy and Wheedles, his brothers, laughed at his fears, and told him not to mind.

After that he plucked up courage, and when a little girl suddenly ran out of the crowd and picked him up in her arms, he tried not to be afraid. "Oh, you sweet little thing!" the girl exclaimed, pinching his ears softly. "Where did you come from, and where did you get those pink eyes and those long, fluffy ears?"

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Then the girl kissed Bumper and rubbed his nose against her soft, fresh young cheek; but when the old lady approached, all smiles, and said, "Want him, dear?" she put him down in the basket again.

"Want him? Of course, I want him!" she replied a little scornfully. "But I can't buy him to-day. I spent all my birthday money on candies and cakes. Take him now before I steal him and run away."

She was a pretty girl, with red hair, a dimple in her chin, and one big freckle on the end of her nose; but her eyes were blue, and they made Bumper think of the sky which he could see through a hole in the roof of his house. I suppose it was because he had pink eyes that he thought blue was so becoming to little girls.

That night when he got home, Bumper was bursting with excitement. The day's experience was enough to cause this, but the words of the little girl who had spent all of her birthday money for candies and cakes were fresh in his mind. The first thing he did when he got in his box was to pester his mother with so many questions that she had hard work answering them.

"A little girl asked me where I came from, mother, and I couldn't answer her. Where did I come from?"

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"Why, dear, from a snowball, of course. How else could you be so white?"

"And have I pink eyes?" That was the little girl's second question.

"What color did you think they were?" asked Bumper's mother, smiling. "Look at the eyes of your brothers and sisters."

Bumper looked in Jimsy's and Wheedle's eyes, and saw they were pink, but he was still doubtful. "But mine," he added, "are you sure they're pink? They might be green or yellow—"

Mother rabbit laughed and hopped over to a basin of water which the good old woman kept filled for her pets. "Look in that," she said, "and then tell me what you see."

Trembling with excitement, Bumper plunged both front paws in the basin, and the water rippled in little waves so that he could see nothing. He was terribly disappointed at first, for the water was a little dirty, and he was afraid the black specks floating in it might be the reflection of his eyes. Then the water cleared as the dirt settled at the bottom, and straight up from the depths there glowed two tiny pink spots. Bumper watched them in silence until his mother asked: "What do you see, dear?"

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"Two pink stars!" he murmured.

Mother rabbit, like all fond mothers, smiled and leaned over to kiss the wet nose of her little one. Jimsy and Wheedles and all the other rabbits were anxious to see the two pink stars in the water, and they crowded around the basin to get a look. They held their breath in amazement, for wonder of wonders! instead of two, there were a dozen tiny pink stars! They twinkled and flashed, and when they bobbed their heads up the stars faded away or disappeared entirely.

Mother rabbit, who was very fond of her little ones, smiled proudly, and said:

"All my children have pink eyes!"

"But don't all rabbits have pink eyes?" asked Bumper, whose little brain was still bursting with questions.

"No, dear, they do not—only those rabbits that come from snowballs have pink eyes."

"Oh!" exclaimed one and all, and particularly Bumper, who had started all this probing into the family history.

Then the last question of the little girl popped up into his head, and without waiting to catch his breath, or to give his mother time to think up a suitable answer, he blurted it out.

"Where did I get these long, fluffy ears, mother? The little girl said they were long and fluffy."

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Just to make sure he had not been deceived, he pulled them right down between his two front paws, and looked at them. They were, indeed, long, silky and fluffy, and as white as snow.

Mother rabbit shook her head slowly just as if she intended to scold, and then said in the softest, gentlest of voices:

"I'm afraid that little girl has been putting vain ideas into your head, dear. You must be careful, and not let compliments about your eyes and ears spoil you. If you do people won't like you."

Bumper promised not to be spoilt by listening to what little girls said, and then eagerly repeated his question.

"Why, that is simple enough," Mother rabbit answered, having had time to think. "When you were only a little snowball, we had to hang you up to dry, and that pulled your ears out."

That was an answer good enough for any rabbit, and Bumper should have been satisfied, but he had a very inquisitive mind.

"But why didn't I melt when I was hung up to dry?" he asked quickly. "Snowballs melt in the sun, don't they?"

"Yes," gravely, "so they do, dear, if you leave them in the sun too long. But it was mother's business to see that you didn't melt. It's like baking bread or cake. If you leave the dough in the oven too long it burns up, and then it isn't either bread or cake. It's very hard to know just when it's done, and it's harder"—sighing aloud—"for mothers to know just when a snowball is turning into a white rabbit, and when it's beginning to melt away into nothing. Now don't ask me any more questions to-night. It's bed time, and little rabbits with pink eyes should be fast asleep."

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Which was true, but Bumper went to sleep dreaming of a million questions he would ask his mother in the morning.

STORY II WHY BUMPER WAS LEFT AT HOME

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Bumper woke up the next morning so hungry that he couldn't think of any of the million questions to ask until he'd finished eating his breakfast. Besides a cabbage, there were some carrots and beet tops the old woman had fished out of a grocer's backyard, and Bumper had to jump lively to get his share. Jimsy and Wheedles were already on their second carrot when he opened his eyes.

"You'll never catch up with me!" said Jimsy, greedily. "I'm one carrot ahead of you."

"And I'm one and a half," mumbled Wheedles, with his mouth full.

"I don't care. Sleep is better for you than so much eating. I had a longer nap, and such beautiful dreams! Oh, I do hope some of them will come true."

"Tell us about them," said Jimsy, forgetting to eat. "I never have dreams."

"Neither do I," complained Wheedles. "You must tell us about your dreams."

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"As soon as I finish my breakfast I will," replied Bumper. "Yes, they were beautiful dreams! I thought I was in a big place filled with crisp lettuce and golden carrots, and a girl with red hair picked me up in her arms and carried me away."

Bumper stopped talking while his brothers looked in amazement at him. They had heard the day before his story of the red-haired girl who wanted to buy him, and they were interested. But while they stopped and waited for him to proceed, Bumper chewed away at his carrot until it was all gone. Then, picking up a second one, he said: "Now I'm up with you. I'm on my second carrot. To-morrow morning I'll tell you the rest of the dream."

Jimsy and Wheedles were greatly surprised and angered at the trick Bumper had played upon them, and they immediately began eating their carrots again as fast as they could.

They were in the midst of their breakfast when the old woman came in the backyard with her basket. All the rabbits set up a commotion then, for they knew she would choose some of them to take away and sell. There were two reasons why they all wanted to be chosen.

One was they liked the change from their narrow quarters to the street corner and the sights of the city. Another was they all hoped some day to be sold and taken away to a big house where they would be petted and fed until their little stomachs would nearly burst open. They were a little crowded in their home, and new baby rabbits were coming all the time so that if some of them weren't sold they'd soon be walking all over each other.

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"Now, which ones shall I take to-day?" the old woman mumbled, smiling upon all of them.

They all bobbed their heads and blinked their pink eyes, and Jimsy jumped over Bumper's back and hopped right into the woman's hands.

"Well, Jimsy," she said, "you seem very anxious to go, so I'll take you for one."

Wheedles tried the same trick, but it didn't work the second time. "No, Wheedles, you've got a cold," she said, pushing him back. "People don't want to buy rabbits that have colds."

Bumper had no cold, and he decided to try his luck, but Topsy, a big rabbit, got in his way, and nearly bowled him over. Bumper squealed, and the old woman pushed Topsy away.

"No, you can't go for being so rough," she scolded. "Poor little Bumper, did Topsy hurt you?"

Bumper was sure then that she intended to take him along with Jimsy; but no! she put him down gently, and selected three others. Bumper's disappointment was so great that a tear came into one of his pink eyes.

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It was mother who consoled him when the old woman had filled her basket and left the yard. "Never mind, dear, your time will come. You're younger than Jimsy."

"But why should I always be left at home?" complained Bumper.

"It's the place for little rabbits," was the reply. "There's no place so safe and comfortable."

"But you always told us some day we'd find a better home, with plenty to eat, and nothing to do," whimpered Bumper, who felt quite cross. "Why did you tell us that?"

Mother rabbit looked quite perplexed for a moment. "I think, dear," she said finally, "you ask more questions than any child I ever had."

Bumper's eyes shone with amusement. "I have a million more of them to ask, mother. I dreamt of them last night."

"Then," laughing at him, "find the answers to them in your dreams to-night."

The next day Bumper had his turn, and then again the following day, but each time he returned home unsold. Jimsy was bought by a little boy, and triumphantly carried off, and Wheedles was captured by a girl. Even Topsy, who was big and clumsy, found a purchaser, and disappeared from the backyard. On returning home the fourth time, Bumper was in a disappointed mood, and felt very unhappy.

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"Why is it, mother," he asked, "that no one buys me? Am I so homely that no one wants me?"

"What a question to ask, dear!" smiled mother rabbit. Then, patting him on the head, she added: "Bend down your ears, and I'll whisper a secret in them."

Bumper squatted down, and pulled both long ears toward his mother so he wouldn't miss a word.

"It isn't good for little rabbits to hear what I'm going to tell you," she whispered. "It often makes them proud and vain; but I suppose you will know it some day."

Mother rabbit sighed, as if the secret was hard to tell, and not very pleasant to hear. Mothers are very queer sometimes, even rabbit mothers.

"It's because you're so beautiful, dear!" she whispered finally. "You're whiter than any of my children, and you have the softest fur, and the pinkest eyes. Now do you understand?"

No, Bumper didn't understand a bit. He was more perplexed than ever. If he was handsomer than other white rabbits, then why didn't people buy him first? Why did they look at him, and return him to the basket, and say:

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"I guess I'll take the other one?"

"It must be people don't know how pretty I am," he said finally. "What can I do to make them see?"

Mother rabbit laughed until her fat sides wobbled like a fur muff filled with playful kittens. "Dear, dear," she exclaimed, with tears in her eyes. "I thought you would understand. It's because the people don't have the money to give."

"Why don't they?" he asked, a little peeved. "Don't they have all the money they want?"

"No, dear, not all of them. Some are nearly as poor as we are, and they have to be careful of the pennies. That's why they don't buy you. The old woman asks too much for you."

This didn't improve Bumper's temper any; but right away he thought of the little girl with the red hair. "Do you think she has plenty of money?" he asked. "She was beautifully dressed, and had a rose in her hair."

"I don't know. Some people put all their money on their backs, and starve their stomachs. It may be this girl was that kind."

Bumper was sure she was wrong, for the red-haired girl didn't look starved; but she didn't have any of her birthday money left, and she confessed she'd spent it all for cakes and candies. Bumper wondered if she'd had anything to eat since, or if she was saving up her money to buy him.

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That night he had another dream in which the red-haired girl appeared; but in the morning the old woman took him out of the box, and said: "It's your turn, Bumper. I must sell you to-day. I need the money badly."

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STORY III BUMPER IS SOLD

Bumper was taken to the street corner with Fluffy, Dimples and Pickles. It was a cloudy day, and the old woman limped as she walked along with her basket on her arm. Damp weather always brought out her rheumatism, and sometimes made her very cross.

Dimples and Fluffy began playing they were on a ship in a storm, and when a drop of rain hit Pickles on the nose he squealed with delight, and joined them in the game. They scampered around so lively inside that the old woman stopped and opened the cover of the basket.

"Stop that!" she said quite angrily, "or I'll dump you all in the gutter!"

The threat was enough to send each to a corner of the basket, where they eyed each other and tried to think up some less boisterous game. It was beginning to rain steadily outside, and the water trickled through the top of the basket. Every time a drop hit one, he squealed, but no one dared to jump and run around.

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Now rabbits don't sell very well on rainy days, especially white rabbits. Their fur gets all wet and roughened up, and they look more like half-drowned rats than pretty, fluffy bunnies. Fluffy was taken out of the basket first, but nobody took any notice of her, and when she came back she was all wet and shivery.

"B-r-r-r, it's awfully wet outside," she said, shaking with the cold. "I'm glad nobody bought me, for I'd rather be in here safe and warm than in somebody's arms."

Pickles's turn came next. He had an ingrowing toe nail, which sometimes made him grouchy and sour, so he was dubbed Pickles. He looked and acted like his name now. He squealed when the old woman picked him up in her hand, and when a splash of rain landed on the back of his neck he kicked both hind legs and wriggled his body free and fell plump back into the basket.

The old woman was very angry. "You, Pickles," she growled, "you'll go to bed to-night without any supper."

Somebody passed just then, a lady with an umbrella over her head, and the woman with rabbits to sell turned to her in her most beguiling way. "Rabbits, lady! Nice, pretty rabbits for sale!"

The lady stopped long enough to let her umbrella drip all over the basket, and then she asked:

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"Are they white rabbits? I don't want any other kind."

"Yes, ma'm, pure white bunnies, with pink eyes, and long, fluffy ears—the dearest and cutest little things you ever saw. Let me show you."

With that she made a grab in the basket. It was a blind-man's bluff grab, for she couldn't see one of the rabbits huddling in the corners. Bumper was the nearest, and her hand closed over him.

"That's the prettiest one I have, ma'm," she said. "He's my pet, an' I hate to sell him, but I need the money an' you can have him."

It was raining pitchforks outside, or something like that, and, for a moment, Bumper couldn't see anything but the big drops of water splashing in his eyes. Then the lady held the umbrella over his head, and he looked up into her face. She was a sweet, womanly lady, but not exactly the kind of mistress Bumper had pictured belonging to.

"He is a dear little thing," the lady said, taking him in her arms and rubbing his back. "And so friendly! Why, he's trying to cuddle up under my arm."

The fact was, Bumper was trying to get in her muff away from the dripping umbrella. He made a dive for the nearest open end, and squeezed all but his tail through. [Pg 26]

"How cute of him! I believe I must take him. How much is he?"

Now Bumper's heart nearly stopped beating when he heard the lady ask this question, for had not his mother told him that he cost too much money for most people to buy? Did this lady have plenty of money, or did she put it all on her back and starve her stomach? She was beautifully dressed, and her cheeks were not very plump and fat—not a bit like those of the red-headed girl with a freckle on the end of her nose.

"Two dollars, ma'm, an' he's cheap at that! You don't find rabbits like him once in a year."

Bumper's hopes took a sudden drop. Two dollars! Why, Jimsy had been sold for one dollar, and Wheedles for seventy-five cents, while Topsy, who was old and fat, brought only fifty cents. My, two dollars was an awful lot of money!

"Two dollars!" repeated the lady, fumbling in her dress with one hand. Then, to Bumper's surprise and delight, she added: "I think I'll take him. I want him for my nephew. Toby's hard to suit, but I think he'll be pleased with a rabbit. What did you say you called him?"

"Bumper, ma'm!"

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"That's a queer name, but I like it."

"It was because he was always bumping his nose when he was a tiny mite," the old woman explained, taking the two dollars from the lady. "His mother named him first, and then his brothers and sisters took it up, and, of course, I had to follow 'em. Rabbits don't like to be called by two different names, and if I was you, ma'm, I'd keep on calling him Bumper. He wouldn't know any other name."

"I will always call him Bumper, but"—sighing—"I'm afraid Toby will want to nickname him. He makes up the funniest names for all his pets."

"Tell him then Bumper will run away and never come back. Rabbits are more knowing than you think, ma'm."

"I always thought they were very cute and gentle, but very stupid," replied the lady. "But maybe I was wrong. Bumper doesn't look stupid."

"Lordy, ma'm! he ain't no more stupid than that Toby you speak of, whoever he may be."

"Well, Toby isn't stupid, whatever else you may say of him," smiled the lady. "He's bright enough, but he's sometimes very thoughtless, and I fear a little cruel."

"Cruel, ma'm!" And the old woman who sold rabbits for a living stiffened her bent form, and frowned. She stretched forth a hand as if to reclaim her Bumper, but the lady moved away with her purchase under her arm. [Pg 28]

"Oh, I'll see that he isn't cruel to Bumper," she said.

While listening to all this conversation, Bumper experienced strange and unusual emotions. He had learned more about white rabbits in a few moments than his mother had ever taught him in all the days of his youth. They were considered stupid, were they?—but cute and gentle. Huh! He wasn't stupid! No, indeed! If the lady thought so he'd show her what a mistake she'd made.

Just to prove it, Bumper began to gnaw at the lining of the muff, and pretty soon got his whole body under it, and then he began to kick and wriggle to get out. He felt he was being smothered alive, and he squealed aloud. The lady finally rescued him, but not until she had torn away half the lining from her muff.

"Oh, you stupid little Bumper!" she said, reprovingly. "You mustn't do such things!"

Bumper felt so crestfallen at this rebuke that he remained perfectly quiet during the rest of the walk. He snuggled up into the crook of her arm, and peeped out once only when they reached a [Pg 29]

big house and began ascending the steps.

So this was to be his future home! What a big place it was! Why, hundreds and hundreds of white rabbits could live in that house and never lack for elbow room.

Just then, when Bumper began to feel a little proud about his future home, a great noise and clatter behind the door startled him, and it opened so suddenly that he nearly popped out of the lady's arms. And what happened to him behind that door of the big house might fill chapters and chapters, but it will all be told in the next story.

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STORY IV WHAT HAPPENED IN THE DREADFUL HOUSE

When the door of the house flew open with a bang, the lady holding Bumper put one hand to her heart, and exclaimed:

"Oh, dear, what has happened now!"

Bumper couldn't see any one in the dark, but evidently the lady could, for a cool, quiet voice spoke to her.

"Toby threw his playthings down the stairs, and he's riding the banisters with a tin pan for a hat. I suppose you heard the clatter of the pan as it fell off."

"It sounded to me as if the house was falling down, Mary! I do wish Toby would behave."

The one addressed as Mary laughed. She seemed like a pleasant, wholesome young woman, with pink cheeks and smiling gray eyes. "I've told him to behave a dozen times, but he won't mind. He's been cutting up all the morning. But what have you there in your arms, Aunt Helen?"

"Guess, Mary. It's for Toby's birthday."

"Some kind of a toy, I suppose—or maybe a book."

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"A book for Toby! What an idea! He'd throw it in the fire unless he liked the pictures. No, it's something prettier and better than a book."

She opened her arms, and held Bumper forward so Mary could see him, long, white ears and blinking eyes and all.

"Oh! A dear little rabbit!"

Before Bumper could protest or stop his heart from beating like a trip-hammer, Mary seized him in both hands, and began gently stroking his head.

"What a sweet little thing!" she murmured. "And so tame and friendly!"

Bumper was rubbing his wet nose against her velvety hands and thinking how soft and pleasant they were to the touch.

"Yes, he's so tame he never once tried to jump out of my hands," replied Aunt Helen. "I'm almost afraid to let Toby have him now that I've brought him home. Do you think he'll be rough with him?"

Mary's face turned very grave and serious. "He's pretty young to have a rabbit, Aunt Helen. If he should drop him—or—or—Well, we must teach him to be very careful."

"Yes, I will speak to him myself."

You can imagine the state of Bumper's feelings by this time. Toby was undoubtedly a cruel boy—Aunt Helen had said as much, and Mary had confirmed it—and they were both afraid he was too young to own a pet rabbit. What if he should drop him to the hard floor! Bumper peeked over Mary's hands and looked below. The floor seemed a long distance away. If he should fall it would very likely break a leg or his neck. Oh, why had he been bought for a cruel boy's birthday present.

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Bumper wanted to run and hide. If it hadn't been for the fear of falling to the hard floor, he would have jumped out of Mary's hands and scampered away. But he had no chance to do this. There was another loud racketty-rack-clumpity-bang! First a big tin dish pan rolled all the way down the stairs into the hall; then a set of building-blocks, a wooden hobby horse, a lot of animals from a Noah's ark, tin soldiers, a drum, and a train of cars. Toby came last, sliding down the banisters, and shouting in glee as he landed at the bottom.

"It was a landslide, Auntie!" he shouted. "We all slid down the mountain together."

"Toby, how many times have I told you not to do that!" reproved Mary, while Aunt Helen turned pale and stood stock still.

Toby paid no attention to the rebuke. He was a small, freckle-faced boy. In one hand he held a whip, and in the other the broken head of a wooden horse. He picked himself up, and began slashing his toys with the whip. Bumper gave him one terrified glance, and made a desperate dive for Mary's open waist. But Toby had sharp, bright eyes.

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"What you got, Mary?" he shouted, running toward her, whip in hand. "Oh, a rabbit! Yes, it is! You needn't hide him! I see him! It's a rabbit! Let me have him!"

"Be careful, Toby, you'll tear my dress."

"Let me have him! He's mine."

"No, no, Toby, don't touch him. Wait! I'll show him to you!"

But Toby was much too spry for Mary or Aunt Helen. He darted around back of them, and caught Bumper by the tail—and you know a rabbit's tail is the smallest part of him—and began pulling it. Bumper let out a squeal, and pulled the other way with all his might.

"I got him!" shrieked Toby gleefully. "I got him by the tail."

"Toby! Toby!" cried Mary, catching his hand. "Let go of him this instant."

"I won't! I won't! He's mine!"

Between Toby pulling at one end, and Mary holding the other, Bumper felt as if he would part somewhere in the middle. He kicked with his hind legs, and scratched Toby's hands, but the boy would not release his hold. He gave a sharp jerk, and Bumper let out a squeal.

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"You cruel, wicked boy!" exclaimed Mary, as Toby pulled the rabbit from her arms, and swung him around by his hind legs. "Let me have him this minute. You'll kill him!"

"No, I won't! He's mine! Isn't he, Aunt Helen? You brought him to me, didn't you? There now, Mary, she nodded her head! I'm going to keep him."

"But, dear, you must be very gentle with him," said Aunt Helen. "You'll hurt him carrying him that way."

"That's the way to carry rabbits, by their hind legs," replied Toby. "I saw them in the market the other day—a whole bunch of them—hanging by their hind legs."

"But they were dead rabbits, Toby, and not live, white ones. Now let me show you how to hold him."

But Toby was more interested in the experiment of making Bumper squeal than in listening to his aunt's instructions. It was better than the squeaking camel he had or the girl's doll that said mamma every time you squeezed it. All he had to do was to squeeze the legs or swing the rabbit around to make him squeal. Each time he laughed and shouted with joy.

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Mary could stand this cruel torture no longer. She made a dive for Bumper, and caught him by the fore paws. In the struggle that followed Bumper was likely to be pulled apart. What might have happened no one could tell if the door had not suddenly opened, and a young girl, with red hair and freckles on her nose, entered. She was humming some tune to herself or to the doll she carried in her hands; but she stopped singing, and stared at Toby and Mary pulling at the white rabbit.

Then she dropped her doll, and sprang forward to Bumper's rescue. "Oh, that's my rabbit, cousin Mary!" she cried. "It's the one I wanted to buy from the old woman, but I didn't have the money. Let go of him, Toby! You're hurting him!"

"I won't! He's mine!" came the reply. "You let go of him!"

"He's not! He's mine!"

"He ain't! He's mine!"

"Stop that!" cried the girl, when Toby squeezed the legs so hard Bumper whimpered with pain.

"I won't! I'll squeeze him all I want to."

To make good his word he gave the rabbit a harder squeeze. Then something happened that surprised every one. The girl raised a hand, and boxed Toby's ears so hard that it made him howl.

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"Now, take that, and see how it feels to be hurt!"

Toby clapped both hands to his ears, and in a flash the red-headed girl seized Bumper in her arms and ran pell-mell from the room. Toby started after her, but when the door slammed in his face he flopped down on the floor to howl and kick just like a baby who had eaten pickles instead of good milk for breakfast.

STORY V

BUMPER AND THE RED-HEADED GIRL

The red-headed girl, with the freckles on her nose, and a dimple in her chin, didn't stop until she was on the top floor of the big house where Toby's howls couldn't be heard. She opened the door of a dark room, and went in, slamming and locking the door after her.

"There, now I guess he can't find us!" she exclaimed.

Then to Bumper, she turned and began crooning: "You poor little rabbit! Did Toby hurt you? Don't be frightened now. I won't let him have you again. I'll buy you if it takes all my Christmas money. You're mine now!"

You can never imagine how these words soothed Bumper's ruffled feelings. It was like being rescued from a terrible giant who intended to dash out your brains and eat you for supper. Bumper's heart began to beat slower and slower until pretty soon it wasn't going any faster than the ticking of the clock outside in the hallway.

They sat there in the dark room for a long time, the girl rubbing Bumper's head and back and crooning gently to him. Then a noise outside—the sound of approaching footsteps—alarmed the white rabbit again.

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"Edith!" a voice called. "Edith, are you up here?"

It was Mary, her cousin, calling, and the red-haired girl gently pushed open the door, and whispered.

"I'm in here, cousin Mary. Where's Toby?"

"He's looking for you. I think you'd better get out of the house before he finds you. Take Bumper with you, and we'll buy him something else to keep him quiet."

"Then I can keep him?—call him really and truly mine?"

"Yes, if you can get away with him. Toby isn't old enough yet for pets."

"He's old enough," sniffed Edith, "but he's been spoilt, and don't know how to treat them. If he ever lays hands on my rabbit again, I'll box his ears so hard he'll never forget it. That's what I'll do!"

Mary seemed to concur in this, for she smiled, and rubbed Bumper's head before adding. "He'd raise an awful howl, I suppose, if he knew you were here. You'd better go home now. You can get through the backyard without Toby seeing you."

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"Let him see me if he likes," retorted Edith, shaking her red curls and tilting her freckled nose upward. "I won't let him have the rabbit. Aunt Helen ought to spank him. That's what he deserves."

Mary walked ahead down the stairs to see if Toby was around, and then when they reached the kitchen Edith climbed through an open window into the backyard. There was a thick hedge around the yard, and back of that another yard which smelt so sweet with flowers and green lawn that Bumper raised his head and sniffed.

My, what a whiff that was! There was a vegetable garden hidden back of the rose bushes, filled with crisp lettuce, golden carrots, emerald-green cabbages, blood-red beets, blanching celery, peas, beans, corn, potatoes, and green grass everywhere. It was a whiff from Rabbit Arcady, and Bumper forgot all the dangers he had been through.

"No, no, you mustn't jump out of my arms!" warned Edith when he struggled to get down and roll around in the green grass. "Toby might be looking."

There was an opening in the thick hedge, and through this the red-haired girl crawled into the second garden. If anything, this was a more wonderful garden than the first. The odors were intoxicating. There were flowers and birds and trees as well as succulent vegetables. A most wonderful elm tree spread out like an umbrella and shaded the whole lawn. Beneath this the girl stopped a moment, and let Bumper nibble at the green grass.

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For a city rabbit who had never seen green grass growing, and had only tasted of vegetables several days or a week old, this visit to the garden was like a foretaste of what all rabbits must consider heaven. Nothing Bumper had ever eaten tasted quite so good as that grass, and when the girl picked a fresh, crisp carrot from the garden he couldn't believe it was anything but a magic carrot. It was so sweet and juicy that it made his mouth water.

"Now you must come in the house," Edith said after he had eaten so much that he was in danger of exploding like an over ripe tomato. "I'm going to keep you right in my bedroom to-night. Then daddy will make a house for you in the morning."



He couldn't believe it was anything but a magic carrot

Bumper spent the night in a box lined with fresh, green grass at the foot of the little girl's bed, but not until after he had met another person whom he feared and disliked almost as much as the bad boy called Toby. She was a cross old nurse, who looked after Edith, and she didn't like rabbits—not live ones. She admired Bumper's soft, white hair, and remarked:

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"Wouldn't it make a handsome fur neck scarf? I wonder how much it would cost."

Edith snatched the rabbit from her hands. "You wicked old thing!" she exclaimed. "I believe you'd kill Bumper just for his fur."

"What a funny little girl you are," the nurse laughed. "What are rabbits for if you can't use their skins for furs."

With that Edith clapped Bumper in the box, and sat on the lid. "I'm going to sit there until you go," she said.

The nurse laughed, and when she finally left the room the red-haired girl jumped up and locked the door. Then she patted Bumper again before slipping in bed for the night.

It was early morning before the rabbit heard another word from her. The moon peeking in through the window made Bumper feel quite at home, and with it came the sweet aroma of that garden, intoxicating smells of roses, green grass and succulent vegetables.

"Are you there, little Bumper?" the girl called just as the sun rose. She was in her thin nightie, with her wonderful braids of red hair streaming down her back. Bumper thumped on the box with both hind feet to express his delight at seeing her again.

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"Now you're coming to bed with me," she added. And sure enough, she lifted the white rabbit from the box and carried him to her bed. It was soft and warm under the sheets, and Bumper began playing hide-and-seek with her toes, making her shout and giggle every time his whiskers rubbed against one. It must have been the noise they made that attracted the nurse, for she suddenly knocked on the door and tried to open it.

Edith sprang out of bed, and put the rabbit in his box before she opened the door. "Why was that door locked?" asked the nurse severely.

"Because," replied Edith saucily, "I didn't want you snooping in here in the night to steal bunny."

"Well, of all things! If you ever do that again, I'll tell your mother! Suppose the house took fire with you locked in here."

"I'd know enough to unlock the door, wouldn't I?" retorted the girl.

The nurse went to the bed and threw back the sheets to air them. Then, in angry amazement, she exclaimed: "You've had that dirty beast in the bed! Now don't tell me a story."

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"Yes, Nursy, and we had a beautiful time playing hide-and-seek under the bedclothes."

The nurse stared hard at Edith, and then shook her head. "You're a naughty girl, and I'll give the rabbit to Carlo. See if I don't?"

This didn't frighten the girl a bit, and she laughed in the nurse's face; but it gave Bumper such a

shock that he missed three heart beats and one of his whiskers, for he knew Carlo was the dog he had heard barking all night long.

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STORY VI BUMPER AND CARLO

The little white rabbit found a home already waiting for him in the prettiest corner of the garden, but before that the red-haired girl harnessed him to a ribbon, and let him eat grass and vegetables to his heart's content wherever he took a fancy to go. Edith lost her appetite apparently in watching her pet eat, for she wouldn't go into breakfast even after the nurse had called her several times; but finally, when her mother came out, and took her by the hand, she obeyed.

"Can't I take the rabbit in with me?" she asked.

"No, dear, put him in the pen over there. He'll be quite content alone."

So Bumper found himself alone in the garden, or rather in a pen shut off from the rest of the garden by stout chicken wire. There was a box in back of the pen, filled with soft grass and straw, and a tin pan filled with fresh water. There was such a variety of things to eat that he kept nibbling first a carrot, then a cabbage, then a blade of grass, then some corn, then a piece of bread, then some crackers, then a red beet, then a spear of grass again, and so on through all the long list of good things.

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It was such a mixture that he was never sure just what he had in his mouth. It was just as if a boy or girl had crammed the mouth full of gum drops, chocolates, fudge, lollypops, taffy, peppermint, lemon and wintergreen drops, and a few pieces of fruit cake by way of change. How could he or she tell just what the teeth were munching on?

Bumper tasted them all, and thought that each one was sweeter and better than the other; but when he got around to the end of his circle he had to begin all over again to see if they didn't all taste better the second time. My, it was a feast that made his eyes open and his stomach swell like a toad's trying to swallow a gnat.

Edith came out so soon that Bumper knew right away that she hadn't eaten much breakfast, and half of it was in her hands, and apparently the other half was on her face instead of being in her stomach where it should have been.

"Do you like bread and jam?" she asked, poking the bread she had been eating at Bumper.

Like a well-bred rabbit, Bumper stuck his nose up and sniffed at the dainty proffered him; but when he got some of the jam on his nose he hopped away and sneezed. It was gooseberry jam, and Bumper hated gooseberries, although he had never tasted of them before.

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"Oh, you funny bunny!" exclaimed the girl. "Why don't you like jam?"

Then she caught a reflection of her face smeared with jam in the pan of water, and she laughed happily. "I don't wonder you don't like it on your face, Bumper," she said. "It does look awful, doesn't it? My, I must have nearly a quart on my face."

Then she began cleaning her lips and chin, using Bumper's pan of water for a wash basin. Bumper didn't object to this, but he did hope she'd remember to change it, and give him clean water to drink. Even gooseberry-jam-water wasn't to his liking.

Early in the morning Edith was carried away by the nurse for her lessons, and then her music teacher appeared, and Bumper could hear her fine, small voice singing in accompaniment to the piano. After that she came into the garden again to play with him.

But she was soon called away to lunch, and then she had to go walking with her mother, and it was nearly sundown when she returned. Her first thought was of the rabbit, and she came running pell-mell across the garden to greet him.

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"Have you missed me, Bumper?" she asked, squatting down on the grass in her new white dress. "I've been awfully lonely without you. I do hate music lessons and visiting. I wish I could stay here all the time with you, and maybe eat grass and green things, and grow fat and white like you. I wonder how it feels to be a rabbit. Yes, I believe next to being a little girl, I'd rather be a rabbit than anything else. Rabbits don't have to work or study or sing or do anything. Goodness! what an easy time you have of it."

Bumper thought so, too, and he began to swell up with pride. He was a very young rabbit, and he was easily flattered. He wanted to tell her that he would rather be a white rabbit than a girl with red hair, when the nurse called Edith to dinner, and she had to leave him.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, and Bumper wasn't a bit sleepy. What rabbit could be in such a wonderful garden with the moon shining down upon it. Bumper danced around in his small pen,

and sat upon his hind legs as if praying to the moon; but in reality he was trying to see how high the wire fence was, and wondering if he could jump over it. He had tried all day to nibble through it, and dig under it, but the wire had only hurt his teeth without giving way a particle. If he was going to get out so he could run around the garden, he would have to do it by jumping clear over the wire fence.

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He tried it once, and fell short by several inches. He got a hard jolt in doing it, and rubbed his head where it hit the earth. But the next time he nearly reached the top.

"I can do it with a few more trials," he said, happy at the thought of his freedom. "I'll surprise the little girl when she hunts for me in the morning."

He hopped back a few feet, and then took a flying leap, and landed plump on the top of the fence. The wire caught him in the middle of the stomach, and there he hung for a moment undecided which way to fall. But he kicked with his hind feet, and that seemed to upset his balance, for he plunged headfirst down, and landed on the other side in a wild somersault.

"Well, that wasn't exactly graceful," he said, "but I'm here, and that's where I wanted to be. Now I'll explore the garden by moonlight."

First he ran to the vegetable garden, and nibbled at whatever he could find; but he was really so full he couldn't eat much more. Then he frisked around on the lawn, playing with his tail, and trying to jump as high up in the air as he could. It was great fun, and Bumper panted with joy.

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Then suddenly out of the dark shadows of the garden something large, fierce and frightfully noisy came bounding toward him. Bumper stood stock still until a deep baying sound told him that it was Carlo, the big dog, whose barking under the bedroom window had disturbed his sleep the night before.

With a bound Bumper leaped over a rose bush, and started for his pen in the corner, but Carlo took the bush in a powerful leap and made a grab for his neck with his jaws. Bumper squealed with fright, and turned to the left to find shelter under some prickly gooseberry bushes. Carlo yelped with pain when the thorns of the bushes stuck in his nose, and from that moment Bumper began to like gooseberries.

But the chase was not over. Carlo drove him out of the bushes and chased him across the lawn into the garden. Bumper tried to hide behind a cabbage, but Carlo saw his white head, and pounced upon him. He missed by an inch, and Bumper, now terribly frightened, and panting for breath, made a dive for a big, dark hole that suddenly opened directly in his pathway.

He ran in this as fast as he could. Carlo followed a short distance, and then got stuck. The black hole grew smaller at the other end, and Bumper felt that he was safe for the present.

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"My, what a narrow escape!" he said, panting for breath. "Now, how am I ever going to get out again! Carlo will pounce on me if I stick my nose out. I guess the best thing I can do is to sleep in here, and in the morning go out when Edith calls me. She'll keep Carlo away."

And with this remark, he rolled up in a ball, and went to sleep.

STORY VII BUMPER MEETS THE SEWER RAT

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Bumper was so young and inexperienced that he didn't know a drain-pipe from an ordinary hole in the ground, nor for that matter a tree trunk that was hollow inside from a rabbit's burrow. Bumper was a city-bred rabbit, born in the backyard of a tenement house, and how could you expect him to know much of the things that ordinary wild rabbits learn by heart before their whiskers begin to sprout?

When he opened his eyes the next morning, he stretched himself, and blinked hard at the circular roof over his head, wondering what sort of a house he was in now. It took some time for his brain to recall the events of the previous night. Then he sat up and smiled.

"Ho! Ho!" he laughed. "Carlo must have had a long, cold wait outside for me. I think I'll take a peek at him."

He was really anxious to see if the little girl was up yet, and if she had missed him. He had perfect confidence in her, and knew that she would call off the dog the instant she saw him.

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Bumper could see that it was morning, for the bright light shining through the big end of the drain-pipe proved that. He crawled along cautiously, making as little noise as possible. If Carlo was waiting at the entrance to pounce upon him, he wasn't going to be caught napping.

Another thing which drew him toward the mouth of the pipe was the fragrant odor of good things from the garden. In spite of the big feast of the night before, Bumper was hungry again, and he longed to get back in the garden and devour a few more carrots and crisp lettuce leaves.

He was within a few feet of the mouth of the drain-pipe, quite confident that Carlo had grown tired of watching and left, when a shadow came between him and the light. Bumper caught sight of a head and forelegs thrust into the opening, and then, without stopping for further investigation, he turned tail and ran back. There was a wild scampering and scraping behind him, and he knew that Carlo was pursuing him in the hole.

But Carlo couldn't follow him very far. The pipe narrowed so that there was just room for Bumper to squeeze through, and no dog, certainly not a big dog like Carlo, could catch him in there. When he reached the place where he had spent the night, he stopped to look around him.

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Horror of Horrors! Carlo or some other animal was close behind him, blocking the entire entrance to the hole. Bumper could hear him scraping along, and could almost feel his breath. A shiver of terror went clear through him. In some strange manner the hole had been enlarged over night, or Carlo had shrunk in size, or what seemed more probable, another dog much smaller had taken up the pursuit.

With a little yip of fear, Bumper scrambled onward again, making his way through the drain-pipe as fast as his feet would permit, which, after all, was not so very fast, for he slipped and lost his footing a dozen times, and once fell all in a heap where an elbow in the pipe brought him to an abrupt stop. There were two holes opening before him, one leading to the right and the other to the left.

Bumper chose the one to the right, and so did the animal pursuing him. The race continued until the rabbit came to another branch where there seemed to be three holes leading off into different directions. Bumper chose the middle one blindly, and ran through it for dear life.

It was very dark, and it was impossible for him to tell where he was going. His one great desire was to escape the pursuing dog or other animal close behind him. Consequently, he was unprepared for the sudden climax of his adventure.

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The narrow tunnel came to an abrupt ending, and when Bumper shot out of it he landed in a big, circular space that gave him plenty of opportunity to turn around and look at his enemy. He had no more idea what kind of a place he was in now than before. It was all so strange to him.

"Hello!" a voice called to him out of the small hole.

Bumper looked up, and saw a big Sewer Rat grinning at him from the mouth of the drain-pipe.

"I never saw a rabbit run faster in all my days," laughed Mr. Sewer Rat. "I couldn't keep up with you. What did you think was after you?"

Bumper was very angry and indignant now that he realized his flight was all unnecessary. He disliked Mr. Sewer Rat and all his tribe, for they had often made their way into the old woman's backyard to annoy the young bunnies. Besides his bad manners and uncouth ways, the Sewer Rat was disgustingly dirty in his habits. How could he be otherwise when he chose to live in sewers rather than in clean quarters above ground?

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"Why were *you* running so fast?" asked Bumper, not willing to admit the rat had frightened him.

"Just to frighten you," was the retort. "I wanted to give you the scare of your life, and I guess I did."

"Oh, no," replied Bumper, assuming an air of dignity. "I wasn't really frightened so long as I knew you were behind me. Carlo couldn't catch me until he nabbed you."

"Carlo! Who's Carlo!" demanded the Sewer Rat, pretending ignorance.

"Oh! Ho!" laughed Bumper. "Don't pretend that Carlo, the dog, wasn't after you. Didn't I see him chase you in the hole? And how frightened you looked! Why, it nearly made me die with laughter."

Mr. Sewer Rat puffed up his cheeks and gnashed his long, white teeth angrily. Bumper's fling had hit the mark.

"If Carlo ever touches me," he said, "I'll bite his nose so he'll remember it. Who's afraid of an old dog like Carlo?"

"You are, I should say," smiled the white rabbit.

The Sewer Rat started to deny this, and then thought better of it. "Well, I wasn't more frightened than you, Mr. White Rabbit. You're as pale as a ghost this very minute."

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"That's a good one," laughed Bumper. "Pale as a ghost! Why, I'm whiter than snow all the time. How could I get paler?"

Mr. Sewer Rat gnashed his teeth again, and swished his long tail. He was plainly angry and discomfited. So he retorted maliciously:

"You're not white at all. You're so dirty your own mother wouldn't know you. White! Oh! Ho! Ho! I wish you could see yourself."

Bumper did see himself, or, at least, a part of himself. Both front paws were muddy; his long ears were covered with iron rust; his fat cheeks were dusty and cobwebby, and to the ends of his

whiskers clung specks of dirt. In his progress through the drain-pipe he had accumulated sufficient dirt to change his color from pure white to a rusty gray.

"I can soon clean myself," he remarked, "and the little girl with the red hair will help me. Is that the hole that leads back to the garden?"

The Sewer Rat suddenly blinked his wicked little eyes. "Yes," he replied, "if you know the right turns to take. If you don't you'll get lost, and never find your way out."

"I think I know my way back," said Bumper, hesitatingly. He hated to ask favors of the Sewer Rat, but when the latter volunteered information he was grateful for it. [Pg 57]

"You'll find a better way back to the garden by following the abandoned sewer you're standing in. Keep straight on to the end. It's much better than crawling back through this small drain-pipe."

"Thank you!" replied Bumper. "I believe I'll go back that way!"

"All right, then. I must be going to my family. I haven't had my breakfast yet. Good morning!"

Bumper thanked him again, and turned to follow the sewer back to the garden, not realizing that the Rat had purposely deceived him out of revenge.

STORY VIII BUMPER RUNS INTO A NEST OF BATS

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The way back to the garden seemed a long one, and Bumper soon began to entertain doubts about the kindness of Mr. Sewer Rat. It was an old abandoned sewer, with plenty of room in it for a whole colony of rabbits, but it was terribly dirty and damp. The musty odor was so different from the pleasant fragrance of the garden he had recently left.

"I must have traveled miles and miles," he thought after a while, stopping to clean off some of the dirt that clung to his white fur. "Either that Rat didn't know what he was talking about, or he told a whopping fib. They always were sneaky animals, the Sewer Rats, and I shouldn't have listened to him."

He stopped to consider whether he shouldn't turn around and retrace his steps; but he was disturbed by the fear that he could never recognize the mouth of the drain-pipe he had come through. He had passed a number of these black holes on his way, all looking alike. [Pg 59]

"I should have counted them, and then I'd know which one was mine," he reflected.

But there was no good crying over spilt milk. He was in the abandoned sewer, and he had to find his way out somehow. Meanwhile, he was getting desperately hungry. Oh, for a mouthful of the succulent grass that grew in the garden, or a cabbage leaf or a piece of celery—anything, in fact, that would satisfy that gnawing at the stomach!

"Ah, well!" he sighed. "I must keep going until I find something to eat. There must be other gardens, and this sewer must lead somewhere."

In a little while he became so thirsty that a drink of water seemed even more desirable than a bite of food. He tried to lick some of the moisture from the sides of the sewer, but that was only aggravating. It seemed to increase rather than diminish his thirst.

One hopeful feature of his adventure was that the big sewer seemed to grow lighter as he proceeded, and he was sure he was coming near the end. But before this hope was realized he stumbled upon something that gave him a shock.

Just ahead of him something long and black hung from the roof of the sewer, reaching down almost to the bottom. Bumper stopped to gaze critically at it, his little heart beating with apprehension. Was this the shadow of some strange animal, or was it simply an innocent log of wood that had got wedged in the sewer? [Pg 60]

As it didn't move, and was perfectly noiseless, Bumper concluded that it was harmless, and so he approached it and after sniffing at it began nibbling the lower part. Suddenly there was a loud squeak, and the big shadow seemed to part in the middle and fly in every direction. It took wings so strangely that Bumper was more astounded than frightened.

The sewer was filled with black shadows that flitted all around him. Then followed a babel of noisy squeaks. Some came so close to his ears that he dodged and ducked in fear. One pair of sharp beaks caught him on the tip of his nose and made him squeal, and another nipped the back of his head. He was too surprised and frightened by this time to run, and he tried to defend himself with his two front paws.

"It's the Sewer Rat! Bite him! Tweak his nose! Snap his tail! Tear out his eyes!"

The air was filled with these faint cries before Bumper began to realize just what he was up

against. He had run into a big bunch of bats sleeping in the abandoned sewer, and his nibbling at them had alarmed and angered them. It was apparent from their remarks that they mistook him for Mr. Sewer Rat, who perhaps had annoyed them many times before, and had even threatened to devour some of them.

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"I'm not the Sewer Rat!" cried Bumper. "Please don't snap out my eyes! I didn't mean to disturb you! Wait! Wait, until I can explain!"

"Who are you? And what are you, then?" cried the biggest and fiercest of the bats, coming so close that his eyes looked like pin-points of light.

"I'm Bumper, the white rabbit!"

There was a pause, and the fluttering wings seemed to stop beating the air.

"Bumper, the white rabbit! Who ever heard of a white rabbit! All rabbits are brown or gray."

It was the big bat speaking for the others, but they all joined him in gnashing their teeth and in whipping the air with their soft, almost noiseless, wings.

"But I assure you I am a white rabbit," replied Bumper. "Come and look at me."

This challenge seemed fair, and some of the smaller bats approached nearer, but the leader warned them back. "Keep away! It's the Sewer Rat in disguise. It's a trick of his to catch you."

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"Is the Sewer Rat white?" interrupted Bumper.

"No, not unless he's been whitewashed or been sleeping in a barrel of flour."

Bumper had to smile at this, for he recalled once how a big rat had been caught in a bag of flour by the old woman who kept rabbits, and his hair was as white as that of the whitest rabbit.

"I can assure you, Mr. Bat, I haven't been whitewashed, and I haven't been sleeping in flour. Look at my ears. Does Mr. Sewer Rat have long ears like mine?"

"No, but he could disguise them by using pieces of white paper. I wouldn't trust him a minute."

In desperation, Bumper then added: "But look at my tail! Did a Sewer Rat or any other kind of a Rat have a tail like mine?"

"Where is it?" asked the big Bat. "I don't see any tail at all. All rabbits have white tails, and you haven't any at all."

Bumper wagged the stump of tail that he thought would convince the bats, but for a moment, he wasn't exactly sure that he saw it himself. Instead of a white, fluffy stub of a tail as soft as cotton, he saw the dirtiest, blackest wad of hair waving in the air that had ever disgraced a rabbit. The truth flashed upon his mind in an instant. What he had supposed to be the blindness of the bats was nothing more than a most natural circumstance.

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He was so black with the dust and mud of the drain-pipe that it was misleading to call himself a white rabbit. He was far from it. He was as dark as any wild rabbit of the woods—darker, in fact, for there was no white fur under his stomach or around his stubby tail.

He was so confused by this discovery that he could not find his tongue to make reply. The Bats, accepting his silence as proof that his deception had been found out, suddenly beat their wings and set up a terrible uproar.

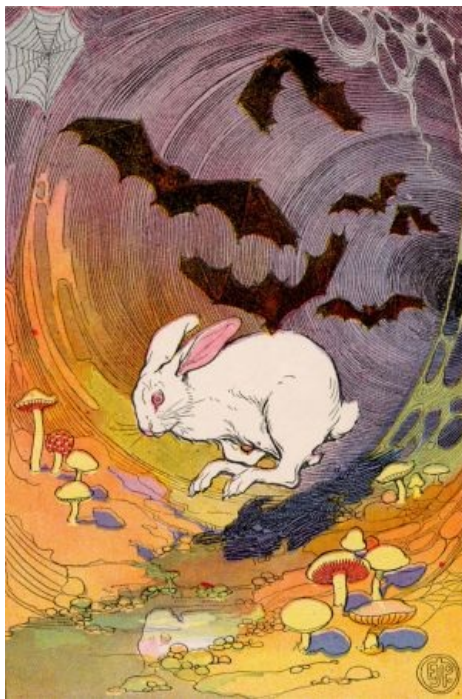
"It's the Sewer Rat in disguise!" shouted the big leader of the Bats. "Now we'll punish him! Drive him out of the sewer! Peck out his eyes!"

Bumper stopped just long enough to realize that he had no chance in a fight against all those whirring wings and little gnashing teeth. If he was to escape at all, he had to get a start on the bats. Even though flight seemed to confirm the suspicions of the Bats, he turned and fled as fast as his four legs would carry him.

There was plenty of room in the sewer, and Bumper made such tremendous strides that he outdistanced all but a few of the leaders. They tried to land on his back and claw him, but he shook them off, and dodged this way and that, until the light ahead suddenly became so strong and blinding that the bats gave up the chase.

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When Bumper finally came to the mouth of the sewer, he was all out of breath, but the view ahead compensated for a lot of his troubles. He could see the blue sky; green fields and waving trees, and near-by the rippling surface of a lake or river. It looked like Paradise after the darkness of the sewer; but all things that glitter, he found out, are not gold, and every earthly Paradise seems to have its serpent lurking somewhere around in the grass.



They tried to land on his back and claw him

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STORY IX BUMPER ESCAPES ON A RAFT

Bumper took a long time to rest and get back some of his breath before he ventured to the very mouth of the open sewer. As soon as he was sure that the bats had abandoned the chase, he threw himself down and closed his eyes from sheer weariness and exhaustion. Then, with returning strength and hope, he raised himself on his two hind legs, and looked around him.

There was water at the mouth of the sewer, and he hopped toward it eagerly. After lapping enough to satisfy his thirst, he began bathing himself. He had never been so dirty before in all his life. He was thankful the red-haired girl wasn't there to see him. She would perhaps disown him.

This thought soothed his feelings a little, and he splashed around in the water until most of the dust and dirt was washed off. Then finding a sunny spot near the entrance, he hopped to it, and sprawled himself out to dry.

Meanwhile, he began examining his surroundings very carefully, and a little anxiously. The sewer dipped down into the river and disappeared from view, and on either side of it, and above it, were very steep walls. No rabbit could climb them. The only other possible way out of the sewer was by swimming.

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Now Bumper had never learned to swim. Perhaps he could do it without learning, but he felt afraid. None of his family had been swimmers, and the river was certainly deep. From his place in the sun he could not see bottom.

Once more the thought of returning to the garden by the way he had come occurred to him; but memory of the fierce bats and the Sewer Rat immediately banished all ideas of this kind from his mind. "I'd never go through that dark sewer again for anything," he said, shuddering. "I must go on until I find another way back to the little girl."

Bumper's one desire was to return to Edith. He was sorry now that he had ever jumped out of his pen. If he had been contented and stayed where the red-haired girl had put him, he would be eating delicious grass and vegetables now instead of lying there alone, hungry and afraid to go on or go back.

His hunger came back to him, and gave him a sharp pain in the stomach. "I must have something to eat," he said. "I'm nearly famished."

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But there was really nothing in sight that he could eat—not a spear of grass nor a leaf. Then, just as if to prove to him that manna sometimes falls from heaven to feed even poor, destitute rabbits, a big leaf came floating down on the wind and fell almost at his feet. Bumper grabbed it, and began chewing it greedily.

"Oh, you mean, horrid thing!" chirped a voice. "That leaf belonged to me. It was for my nest, and

the wind blew it out of my bill."

Bumper looked up, and saw a small sparrow perched on the top of the embankment over his head.

"I didn't know it was yours, Mrs. Sparrow," Bumper replied. "I thought the wind just blew it to me."

"Well, you know it now. Please give it to me."

Bumper held the leaf in his mouth, with half of it already chewed up. It tasted so good that the thought of abandoning it was more than he could stand.

"If you need it more than I do, Mrs. Sparrow," he said, "I'll give it to you. But you must prove it."

"Why, of course I do. I need it for my nest."

"And I need it to keep me from starving."

Mrs. Sparrow cocked her head sideways and looked queerly at him. "You don't look as if you were starving," she observed. "You're as plump and sleek as any rabbit I ever saw." [Pg 68]

"Maybe. But I haven't had any breakfast, and I'm not used to it. This leaf tastes so good I wish I had a hundred more of them."

"Then why don't you go and get them? There are plenty in the park and woods."

"But how am I going to get them?" asked Bumper. "Don't you see I'm caught here in the mouth of the sewer. I can't get out without swimming."

Mrs. Sparrow looked surprised at this information, and flew from her perch on the embankment to a stone below. She cocked her head sideways, and looked all around her.

"What puzzles me," she said finally, "is how you ever got in there without swimming. You can't fly."

Bumper smiled, and shook his head. "No, but I wish I could. I wouldn't stay here arguing with you about this leaf but fly away and get a good breakfast of a lot of them."

"Are you really so hungry, Mr. White Rabbit?"

"Indeed, I am nearly famished."

And then he told Mrs. Sparrow of his adventures in the drain-pipe of the garden and the big abandoned sewer. Mrs. Sparrow was evidently affected by his recital, for she immediately flew away and soon returned with another green leaf. [Pg 69]

"Now eat that, and I'll get you another," she said. "I know what it is to go without breakfast and dinner. I've had to do it many times. Now eat your full."

Bumper devoured the leaf so quickly that it seemed as if he must have swallowed it without chewing it. "You see, Mrs. Sparrow," he remarked, "you couldn't feed me enough. I have a very big appetite. Why, I could eat leaves much faster than you could bring them to me."

"So it seems," murmured the sparrow in a little surprised voice. "I never realized how much some animals can eat at once. I don't think I can do more than just take the edge of your appetite off."

"That's very kind of you. And I shall be grateful to you! If you'll bring me just a few more leaves, I will then ask you to direct me back to the little girl's garden."

"I'm sure I'd like to, but there are so many gardens around, and they all look alike."

"But there's only one with a red-haired girl in it," replied Bumper. "Can't you fly away, and find her?" [Pg 70]

"I'll try," said Mrs. Sparrow.

So after feeding Bumper a few more green leaves, she flew away to find the garden. She was gone so long that Bumper got very restless and discouraged. The few leaves hadn't satisfied his hunger; they had merely stimulated his desire for more. It was past noon when Mrs. Sparrow finally reappeared at the entrance to the sewer.

"What news?" asked Bumper, eagerly.

"Nothing that's good, Mr. White Rabbit. I flew into garden after garden—and all of them pretty, and full of fruits and vegetables—but there was no red-headed girl in any of them. I saw dogs, too—many of them—but I couldn't tell whether any of them answered to the name of Carlo."

"Then it looks to me," remarked Bumper, "that I'm in for a long swim. Where does this river go to?"

"Way out into the country through beautiful fields and woods," replied Mrs. Sparrow.

"Could I reach them, I wonder! I might drown before I could get ashore."

"Wait!" exclaimed Mrs. Sparrow. "Why not escape on a raft? Here comes a big board down the

river. You could hop on it, and not even get wet. Yes, you could do it. It's floating close to the shore." [Pg 71]

"Where is it?" exclaimed Bumper, eagerly.

"Right here! Now get ready for a long jump."

Bumper was not only ready, but very anxious, and when the floating board appeared a yard or more from the mouth of the sewer he crouched for a spring. It was a long jump, and Bumper had some doubts about making it; but he put all his strength in it, and hopped high in the air, and landed safely on the raft.

"Hi! How was that for a jump!" he exclaimed, when he stood upright on the board.

"Fine!" said Mrs. Sparrow. "I wish you a good voyage! Good-bye!"

Bumper wagged his ears in reply, and shouted back a hearty farewell. Then he turned to look down the river. He had escaped from the sewer, but evidently he had adventures still ahead, for the river was broad and long, and very swift in places.

STORY X BUMPER SEES HIS FIRST BLACK CROW

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When Bumper floated away from the mouth of the sewer on his raft, he felt quite jubilant, and a little proud of his achievement. He had escaped the bats successfully, and now he had found a way out of the sewer itself. He was so puffed up by these exploits that he wasn't a bit afraid of what might happen to him on the river.

"This is really much better than being cooped up in the old woman's backyard," he reflected. "Not even Jimsy or Wheedles ever dreamed of such adventures as I've had. My! I feel like a great traveler already."

But when the current of the river began to draw his raft away from the shore into the middle, his enthusiasm was not quite so great. The stream grew rougher, and little white caps appeared ahead. His raft began to bob up and down, and pretty soon a wave washed over it and wet Bumper's feet.

This made him very uncomfortable, for a rabbit doesn't like wet feet any more than a cat does. He tried to sit up on his hind legs and dry his front paws, but other waves washed over the raft and wet his haunches. He couldn't very well stand on his front paws, and dry his hind ones, so he had to endure the wet and cold. [Pg 73]

The river passed through a beautiful field all aglow with flowers and green grass, but the shore was too far away for Bumper to swim to it. "I'll leave well enough alone," he said, "and stick to my raft."

Then he came to a woods through which the river flowed. It was swampy here, and twigs and tree trunks seemed to grow out of the water long distances from the shore.

"If I can find a tree fallen in the river, I'll hop on it and escape," Bumper reasoned.

He was so absorbed in watching for a chance to escape that he hardly noticed a black shadow hovering over him. Not until it approached very close did he duck his head and look up.

"Caw! Caw!"

It was a big, black crow. Now Bumper had never seen a crow. In fact, he had never seen any of the wild animals of the woods, for it must be remembered that he was born in the city. Of course, he had seen plenty of sparrows, for they live in the cities, and also sewer rats. A few bats had also flown over the old woman's backyard on warm nights hunting insects, and Bumper was more or less acquainted with them. [Pg 74]

But a crow! He didn't know what it was. So when the loud, raucous cry assailed his ears, he squatted down on his raft, expecting every minute to be attacked by the black shadow above.

"Caw! Caw!" screamed the big bird.

"Mr. Caw! Mr. Caw!" cried Bumper, supposing that was the bird's name. "Good morning! How do you do?"

Now, the crow is very sensitive about his inability to sing. He used to think that cawing was singing until the birds all laughed at him. After that he kept by himself, and very rarely joined the other birds in the woods or fields.

Bumper's calling him by that name very naturally angered him. It was a slight, a slur upon his voice, and he resented it at once. It must be remembered also that the crow had never seen a

white rabbit before, and Bumper's appearance floating on the plank had excited the bird's curiosity. White rabbits don't run wild in the woods, and Bumper was almost as much a mystery to the crow as the latter was to the former. All the rabbits Mr. Crow knew were gray or brown, with a white belly and tail, and none of them had pink eyes. So it was quite natural that the black bird should be curious and surprised at the sight of a pure white rabbit, with pink eyes, floating down the river on a raft.

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"Caw! Caw!" screamed the crow, flapping his wings so that the wind made by them ruffled Bumper's hair.

"Yes, yes, Mr. Caw. I understand," replied Bumper, getting excited by the nearness of this big, black thing.

"How dare you make fun of me!" cried Mr. Crow, striking the tip of Bumper's ears with his wings. "I'll teach you to laugh at my voice."

With that he struck out with both wings, and nearly upset Bumper from his raft. Frightened by this exhibition of anger, Bumper's teeth chattered, and his voice shook.

"I wasn't making fun of your voice, Mr. Caw," he said. "I think it's a very sweet and pleasant voice. Please don't upset my raft."

The crow, a little mollified by this flattery, circled around the raft, and surveyed the scene below with eyes filled with curiosity.

"What are you, anyway?" he called down at last. "You look like Mr. Rabbit, but I never saw one so white before. What's your name? And what are you doing on that raft?"

"I'm Bumper, the White Rabbit, and—"

"Rabbits are never white," interrupted the crow.

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"But I assure you I am."

"Then you're not a rabbit. You're something else."

Bumper smiled and tried to look pleased. "Would you be something else if you were white?" he asked.

Now this reference to an old fable of the crows touched a sensitive spot. There were white crows, or at least there were rumors of them, and every crow liked to believe the story was true. If one white crow, then why not more? Why shouldn't all crows be white?

"Did you ever see a white crow?" the bird asked.

"Crow! Crow!" stammered Bumper. "Is that your name? I'm sorry, Mr. Crow, I made a mistake. You see, I'm from the city, and crows don't live there."

"No, I should say not—unless the white ones do." He came nearer and showed excitement. "Answer me. Did you ever see a white crow? If all rabbits from the city are white, then maybe that's where the white crows come from."

Now Bumper was learning shrewdness, and he saw right away through the vanity of the bird that had him at his mercy. So, instead of answering directly, he pretended that he knew a great deal more than he did.

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"I'm surprised, Mr. Crow," he said, "that you've never been in the city to see for yourself. You really mean to tell me you've never been in the city?"

"Why, no, it's not a place for crows."

"Maybe not for black ones, but white crows are perfectly safe there, the same as white rabbits. I never saw one hurt there."

"Don't men shoot them?"

"No. People don't shoot birds and animals in the city. They're not allowed to carry guns at all. You're really safer than out here in the country."

"But there's nothing to eat in the city—not for crows. Is there?"

"All the white crows I knew were well fed. And the sparrows get plenty. People feed them sometimes in the park. Why, there are squirrels that have all the nuts they can eat, and they don't have to hunt for them."

"White squirrels?" interrupted Mr. Crow, eagerly.

"Did you ever see a white squirrel, Mr. Crow?" asked Bumper, instead of answering this question.

"No, I never did."

"Then," sighing, "I'm afraid there are none."

Mr. Crow wasn't so much interested in white squirrels as in white crows, and he dismissed the matter from his mind. After a pause, he added: "I believe I'll take a trip to the city, if there's no

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danger. I'd like to visit some of the white crows. It may be if I stay with them in the city, I'll turn white, too."

Bumper didn't want to deceive him, but he was still afraid of him. Instead of answering directly, he asked: "Before you go, Mr. Crow, can't you help me to get ashore? I'm very tired of this raft. You make so much wind with your beautiful wings, I'm sure you could blow me inshore with them."

"Yes, I suppose I could," was the reply. "Well, since you were kind enough to tell me about my relatives in the city, I'll help you."

He began beating his wings violently, and the wind from them nearly blew Bumper off the raft, but the board floated closer and closer to the shore until the rabbit with a hop landed on it, and bade the crow good-bye.

STORY XI BUMPER MEETS A FOX

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When the White Rabbit hopped ashore from his raft, he was so happy that he gave the board a kick with his two hind legs, and sent it spinning far out into the stream. He supposed that he was all alone, and no one had seen him land, but he was surprised when a voice near him cried out:

"Look out! What are you trying to do?"

There was a flop in the water, and when Bumper turned he saw a queer looking fish swimming toward the shore, using his hind legs instead of fins to propel him along. He had big, staring eyes, and a green head, with white under his throat.

"That's what I call a mean trick!" the swimmer added, hopping upon a lily-pad, for it was Mr. Bull-Frog that Bumper had mistaken for a queer fish. "You upset me from that leaf and disturbed my sleep. If I hadn't been an excellent swimmer I should have been dead by this time."

"What did I do?" asked Bumper, in surprise.

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"What did you do?" was the indignant retort. "What but push that board against my lily-pad and knock me in the water! I call that doing a good deal."

Bumper was inclined to laugh at the angry Bull-Frog, who was swelling up to twice his usual size and puffing out his cheeks; but he refrained from this when he realized that he had unintentionally disturbed the frog's noonday siesta. So he answered in a friendly way, hoping to pacify his feelings.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Frog, but I didn't see you on the lily-pad. The fact is, your head is exactly the color of the lily-pad, and no one could distinguish it a few feet away. What a lovely green it is, too—your head, I mean."

Mr. Bull-Frog was apparently as susceptible to flattery as Mr. Crow, and his ruffled feelings began to subside. "Yes, I fancy it is a pretty green," he said. "I've always heard that the lily was the prettiest of flowers, and that's why my family is attracted by it. Would you like to sun yourself on one of these pads? They're very soft and cool."

"No, thank you," laughed Bumper, "I'm afraid I'd get my feet wet. Besides, I'm desperately hungry. If you don't mind I'll eat some of these delicious leaves and grasses."

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"Go ahead. I don't mind. But I can't see what you like about them to eat."

"Neither can I see why a frog likes flies and insects. Ugh! The thought of eating them makes me sick."

"Well," remarked Mr. Frog, "I suppose every one to his taste. As for me, I prefer flies and worms, and—"

He stopped suddenly, and looked through the low brush into the woods back of the river front. Bumper was so busy filling his little stomach with green, succulent things that he scarcely noticed the other's hesitation.

"—and," continued Mr. Frog, after a pause, "some animals prefer eating rats, lizards, toads, and rabbits."

"Rabbits!" exclaimed Bumper. "Who eats rabbits?"

"Mr. Fox for one," answered the Frog, "and if my eyes don't deceive me there's one in the bushes waiting to eat you. If you'll excuse me, I'll take a dive. I've known Mr. Fox to eat frogs when he was very hungry."

There was a flop in the water, and the bullfrog disappeared from sight. Bumper reared up on his

hind legs and looked around him. He had never seen a fox, but his mother had often told him tales about their cruelty. They were forever hunting little rabbits to eat, and they were as sly and cunning as they were barbarous.

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Bumper's quick eyes caught sight of Mr. Fox hiding in the bushes, and, for a moment, his heart beat a loud tattoo. What was he to do? Jump back in the river and try to swim across to the opposite shore, or face the fox and try to escape from him by running?

The woods were very thick all along the river's bank, and there were many good hiding-places; but Mr. Fox stood ready to head him off either way he ran. Bumper was in a quandary just what to do.

"Good morning, Mr. Fox!" he called, hoping to gain time by being polite and friendly.

Mr. Fox sniffed the air, raising his nose several inches above his head. He seemed quite uncertain about something, but his nose apparently satisfied him.

"Good morning," he answered finally, grinning. "But what a joke you played on me, Mr. Rabbit. I couldn't believe my own eyes. What's happened to you?"

"Why, nothing," stammered Bumper, mystified. "Why do you ask such a question."

"Why? Because you're all white. I thought first you were a ghost. And your eyes—they're pink. Whoever heard of a white rabbit with pink eyes?"

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Bumper was quick to see the cause of the fox's surprise. Like the crow, he had never seen a white rabbit before, and he suddenly gained confidence by this knowledge.

"How do you know I'm not a ghost?" he asked, smiling.

"How do I know? Ha! Ha! That's a good one! But I'll tell you how I know. I smell you. No ghost could have that delicious rabbit smell that fills my nose every time the wind blows toward me."

Bumper, for the lack of any words to say, laughed long and hard at this remark. Then he controlled himself, and added: "I wouldn't trust my nose, Mr. Fox. A rabbit's ghost might smell just as sweet and delicious as a real one."

"I don't believe it," grinned Mr. Fox. "Anyway, I'm going to find out. If you're a ghost, why, it will be easy enough for you to disappear."

"Yes, of course, but I should hate to disappoint you. Now, do you know where rabbits go when they die?"

"Yes, in my stomach."

Mr. Fox laughed long and loud at this cruel joke, and Bumper winced; but he was playing for time to think of a plan to escape. Evidently Mr. Fox was not to be outwitted by flattery, and he determined upon another ruse.

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There was a fallen tree near him, but to reach it he would have to advance a few feet straight toward the fox. The heart of the tree was rotten and hollow, and to escape in this was Bumper's design. But how to distract Mr. Fox's attention until he could reach it was the question.

"Oh, Mr. Fox," he said suddenly, "I met Mr. Crow on the river, and he asked me about the white crows in the city. When I told him, he flew away to the city to see if living there would turn him white. That's a joke on Mr. Crow all right, isn't it?"

"Yes—but are there white crows in the city?"

"There are white rabbits. Then why not white crows, and white foxes?"

"White foxes?"

"Yes, why not? Didn't you ever see one?"

"No, but I've heard of them, it seems to me, but they live way up north, don't they?"

"If you want to see one now," continued Bumper, "look at the sun for ten seconds, and sneeze twice, and then—"

"What then?"

"Do as I tell you, and then I'll tell you the rest."

Mr. Fox, after all, was a little vain, or at least very curious, and this strange proposition interested him. He raised his head, and looked straight into the blinding sun.

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"Now count—one, two, three, four, and sneeze," added Bumper.

No fox can look hard at the sun long without sneezing, and after counting six this one nearly sneezed his head off. That was what Bumper was waiting for. He made a dive for the hollow tree, and got inside of it. When Mr. Fox reached the log, and found the hole too small for him, he was quite mad, and said: "I'll make you pay for that trick some day, Mr. Rabbit."

STORY XII

BUMPER ADMIRER BY THE BIRDS

It isn't good for us to be too smart. It sometimes makes us vain, and then one day we overdo it. Bumper had some excuse for playing the trick on Mr. Crow and Mr. Fox, for his life depended upon it; but his success was giving him a little swelled head. He began to feel that he could get out of any danger by using his wits.

"It takes a city rabbit to find a way out of difficulty," he reflected, as he lay snugly in the hollow trunk of the tree. "These country animals are dull-witted. I do hope my cousins of the woods are not so stupid. Perhaps they are, and that's why people say rabbits are cunning but very stupid."

This sort of reasoning was the very thing that got him in trouble, and nearly caused his death. He was so sure that he had outwitted Mr. Fox, he decided after a while to leave the hollow trunk, and eat some of the green leaves and branches growing around outside.

But he knew less about the cunning and patience of the fox than he thought. Instead of trotting off in the woods, chagrined and disgusted by his defeat, the fox was lying low ready to pounce on the white rabbit the moment he showed himself. He was so still that Bumper couldn't hear the rustle of a leaf or the snap of a twig.

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"I think I'll go out now," Bumper said finally. "I'm dreadfully hungry."

Instead of poking his head out cautiously to investigate, he walked straight from the hollow trunk into the very jaws of the fox. There was a sharp click of teeth, and Bumper felt a terrible pain in one of his long ears. He must have leaped five feet in the air, and another five feet sideways. The fox had missed his neck by an inch, but to make up for this mistake, he now pursued the rabbit, leaping nearly as high in the air to catch him as Bumper.

Terrified by the attack, and not knowing what to do, the white rabbit jumped this way and that, clearing high bushes and landing in dense thickets that tore his fur and hurt him terribly. But the fox followed him, paying no attention to the briars and thorns.

It was a narrow escape. For a moment Bumper thought his time had come. He couldn't get back to the hollow tree trunk, and there was no other hiding-place near that the fox couldn't follow him in.

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It certainly would have gone hard with him, and the rest of his adventures could never have been told, if a couple of blue jays hadn't built a nest in a tree directly over him. The commotion in the bushes startled the birds, and with loud, shrill cries they darted down to see what was doing. The sight of the fox angered them. Foxes robbed birds' nests whenever they got a chance, and the blue jays knew this. Therefore, a fox in the neighborhood of their home was not to be tolerated.

They flew down like two blue streaks and landed their sharp bills on the head and face of Mr. Fox. One stroke came so near to one of his eyes that he dodged and ducked, and stopped pursuing Bumper long enough to snap at the birds.

But the blue jays were prepared for this, and they kept well beyond his reach. As soon as he turned from them to the rabbit again they flew back to the attack. They punished him unmercifully, pecking at him until he was so angry that he could hardly see straight.

Meanwhile, of course, Bumper was taking advantage of this interruption. He was running through the underbrush as fast as he could until he was far ahead. Right and left he searched for a hole or any kind of an opening he could crawl in. And there, just ahead of him, appeared what he was looking for! This time it was the hollow branch of a giant tree hanging down, with one end still attached to the trunk.

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Bumper was in the hollow branch like a flash. Mr. Fox reached it just a moment too late, and to vent his anger at losing the rabbit the second time he clawed and snapped at the branch as if he would rip it asunder. But the limb, with a decayed heart, had a stout shell, and the fox soon gave it up in disgust.

Now, the hollow branch, as you know, had one end on the ground, and the other still attached to the trunk where the wind had broken it off. So Bumper found his hole slanting upward, and as he crawled through to the other end he was actually climbing a tree. Perhaps you have heard that rabbits can't climb trees, but Bumper did in this instance.

When he reached the upper end, he found himself ten feet from the ground, with Mr. Fox below and unable to reach him. It was such an unusual sight to see a rabbit up a tree that the fox was more puzzled than ever. "Could white rabbits climb trees?" he asked himself.

Between his discouragement at being twice outwitted, and his amazement at finding a white rabbit with pink eyes that could climb a tree, Mr. Fox finally dropped his tail between his legs and trotted away. Bumper watched him go, and sighed with relief. The blue jays were equally relieved in mind, and once more returned to their home to guard it against invasion.

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When Bumper stuck his head out of the upper end of the big tree branch, he noticed that he was

up among the birds which had been singing a lively concert until he interrupted them. There were birds which Bumper had never seen before, some with startling plumage, and others with voices that sounded like flutes.

They did not renew their singing, but perked their heads sideways and watched this strange thing popping out of the hollow limb. Finally one of them, Mrs. Oriole, clad in a suit of gold, streaked with black and gray, spoke.

"It's Mr. Rabbit's ghost, I do believe. Mr. Fox must have caught him after all."

"If it's a ghost, I'd like to have some of his white fur for my nest," remarked Rusty the Blackbird. "I think I'll steal some."

"He's a pretty lively ghost," warned Piney the Purple Finch. "I wouldn't venture too near."

Bumper blinked his pink eyes at them, and smiled.

"I'm not a ghost yet," he said. "I'm quite alive and well, but very hungry. If you don't mind I'll eat a few of these delicious green leaves." [Pg 91]

The birds watched him in silence. They were as curious and puzzled as the Crow had been. Finally, Mr. Pine Grosbeak plucked up courage to approach nearer.

"If you're really alive," he said, "let me pluck some of those beautiful white hairs as souvenirs. I never saw such lovely fur before."

"You can have one hair," laughed Bumper, "just to prove to you that I'm a real live rabbit."

Mr. Pine Grosbeak took him at his word, and plucked a hair from his back. It made Bumper wince.

"Surely you'll give me one, too, for my nest," added Piney the Purple Finch, and without waiting for consent he plucked two. Rusty the Blackbird came swooping down next. "I need some of your beautiful white fur to show my little ones," he said. "I'll take three."

The other birds expressed their admiration, and then begged a few hairs, too. There was Mrs. Crested Flycatcher, and Mrs. Ph[oe]be Bird, and little Towhee the Chewink. The process of extracting a few hairs from his back caused Bumper exquisite pain, but he wanted to be obliging, especially as the birds all admired and flattered him. [Pg 92]

But when Mr. Woodpecker, who had been rapping on the dead trees of the woods, appeared, Bumper decided it was time for him to call a halt. "That's all I can spare," he said, and darted back into the hollow branch.

He was glad to make friends with the birds, but he didn't want to be robbed of all the clothes he had.

STORY XIII

BUMPER NEEDS A DOCTOR

[Pg 93]

It was necessary for Bumper to show a certain amount of firmness with his newly-made friends, and when he finally emerged from the hollow branch again he made a little speech to the birds.

"If you don't mind, dear friends," he said, "I must ask you to stop plucking me any more. I really can't afford to lose my fur. It's all the protection I have from the rain, and when winter comes I'll need it to keep me warm."

"But a few hairs to line my nest with won't hurt you," pleaded Mrs. Ph[oe]be Bird.

"No," replied Bumper firmly, "if I let you have some I must do the same to all the others, and I don't want to offend Towhee the Chewink or Mr. Crested Flycatcher or any of the others. I want to be friends with all of you."

The justice of this was recognized by all the birds, and they decided not to press the question; but they were voluble with their expressions of admiration. [Pg 94]

"I never saw such beautiful pink eyes before," remarked Piney the Purple Finch.

"Nor such snow-white fur," added Mr. Pine Grosbeak.

"I never knew there was such a thing as a white rabbit in the world," said Rusty the Blackbird.

Bumper could not feel other than puffed up by such remarks, but he tried to hide it from his new friends.

"Are all the rabbits in the woods brown or gray, then?" he asked. "I should like to see them. Do they live around here?"

"Yes," replied the Purple Finch, "but they're very much frightened and keep to their burrows since Mr. Fox came here to live."

"I should like to find them," sighed Bumper. "The fact is, I'm lonesome, and a little bit homesick. I'm not used to the woods, and I should dearly like to find some of my brown cousins so they could teach me things."

"I shouldn't think you needed much teaching," laughed the Red-Headed Woodpecker, tapping the limb with his powerful bill. "Any rabbit that can escape from Mr. Fox and climb a tree as you did must know a great deal."

The other birds nodded their heads at this remark, and Bumper looked pleased at the compliment to his shrewdness. [Pg 95]

"Still," he said, "I'd like to meet my country cousins."

"If I see any of them," Rusty the Blackbird replied, "I'll tell them about you. They'll be surprised to know of your coming."

The rest agreed to carry the news to the wild rabbits when they saw them, and Bumper knew that he would soon find his country cousins. He felt that he would be welcome, and safer with them. There were so many puzzling things about the woods that, in spite of his self-confidence, he was often embarrassed.

This conclusion was further impressed upon him very forcibly a few hours later. When he was certain that the fox had left the vicinity for good, he crawled through his tunnel to the ground, and began feeding on the wild grasses, leaves and strange plants that grew so thickly in the woods.

Most of the plants were new to him. He hardly recognized any of them. Some were sweet and juicy, and others were so bitter that one taste was enough. No one could help him in the selection of his food, and he had to trust to his instinct.

But instinct isn't always a safe guide when one is not familiar with his surroundings. Now just what plant it was that disagreed with him Bumper never knew. His little stomach was so full of leaves and plants that when he first began to feel sick and giddy he thought it was due to overeating. [Pg 96]

"I'll just lie down in the shade now and rest," he said. "Then when I feel better I'll hop around and find a place to spend the night."

This was a wise decision, but it wasn't a cure. Something he had eaten clearly disagreed with him. Instead of growing better he felt worse the longer he rested. In time he was feeling so sick and giddy that if Mr. Fox had appeared he would have made short work of Bumper. His groans soon attracted the birds, and they flew to where he was lying and asked him the trouble.

"I'm dying, I think," moaned Bumper. "I must have eaten some poisonous plant, and I know I'm dying."

The birds were startled by this information, and they held an immediate consultation.

"It's perhaps true what he says," remarked Mrs. Ph[oe]be Bird. "He's eaten some poisonous plant."

"If we only knew what it was," added the Pine Grosbeak, "we might help him. There's an antidote for every poison." [Pg 97]

"Yes," assented the Purple Finch, "but not knowing the kind of poison, we can't prescribe the antidote."

"Why not," suggested the Crested Flycatcher, "give him all the antidotes, and then we're sure to give him the right one."

Rusty the Blackbird laughed out loud at this suggestion. "Why," he said, "we'd stuff him so full of antidotes that he'd die anyhow. No, I think we'd better see Mr. Crane."

"What could he do? He's no kind of a doctor," indignantly remarked Mrs. Ph[oe]be Bird. "The idea of calling him in!"

Rusty, who was a jolly, rollicking bird, winked, and added: "No, he isn't much of a doctor, it's true, but he's got one medicine that nearly always works. I'll go fetch him."

During the dispute that followed, Rusty slipped away, and before the argument had reached a climax, he returned, accompanied by Mr. Crane.

"Now, Dr. Crane," said Rusty, smiling and winking, "see what you can do with the White Rabbit. I told you what ailed him. He's eaten too much of something that disagrees with him."

"Then I can cure him," gravely replied Dr. Crane, approaching Bumper's side. The other birds crowded around to see what he would do. The appearance of Mr. Crane in the rôle of a doctor was a new one to them, and they were curious to see how well he would acquit himself. [Pg 98]

"Let me see your tongue," Mr. Crane said solemnly.

Bumper stuck out his tongue obediently, for he felt so sick that he didn't care what happened to him.

"That's good! Now I must look down your throat. Open it wide."

Bumper readily complied, and Mr. Crane looked down it.

"Now hold it open," Mr. Crane continued. "Don't close it until I tell you. I won't hurt you."

Then to the surprise of Bumper and all the birds, he inserted his long, slender bill down the throat as if he intended to pull something out of it. But he had no such intention. He simply twisted the bill around gently.

Bumper felt a tickling sensation in his throat, and he wanted to gag, but the bill prevented him. The tickling went on for some time until Bumper, in spite of himself, began to gag and retch. Then, as suddenly as Dr. Crane had inserted his bill in the throat, he withdrew it.

But Dr. Crane had accomplished his purpose. The tickling in the throat had started Bumper to vomiting, and all his dinner, including the poisonous plant, came up with a rush. It made him weak and faint, but the pain in his stomach was relieved, and when he was through he looked up and said faintly: "Thank you, Dr. Crane, I feel much better."

[Pg 99]

And Rusty the Blackbird, flapping his wings, crowed with delight: "What did I tell you! Dr. Crane carries an antidote for every poison in his bill! But it's a bitter medicine sometimes."

STORY XIV BUMPER MEETS MR. BEAR

[Pg 100]

Bumper spent a quiet, restful night after Dr. Crane had removed the trouble that was causing his sickness; but he was very weak and faint, and he slept long after the birds were up and singing. He was a little afraid at first to eat anything when he finally crawled from his hole in the decayed tree branch; but, recognizing some sweet birch trees, he ate moderately of the leaves and bark.

This seemed to put new life in him, and by early noon he felt quite himself again. Rusty the Blackbird, who had taken quite an interest in him, brought him the cheering news that his country cousins were living in a burrow a few miles back in the thick woods.

"Take this deer trail back about a mile, and you'll find them," he said. "You can't miss their home. It's under a big rock which you'll come to."

Bumper thanked him, and decided to begin his journey at once. He was very anxious to find a home with the wild rabbits, for his chance of getting back to the garden where the red-headed girl lived was very slim. He had no idea how far down the river he had floated, nor what direction to take to find the garden.

[Pg 101]

"Is there any danger of meeting Mr. Fox on the trail?" he asked a little anxiously.

"No," replied Rusty, "for Buster the Bear frequents the trail, and Mr. Fox is dreadfully afraid of him."

"But how about Buster the Bear eating me up?"

"He might," admitted Rusty, "if he caught you, and was very hungry, but you don't want to let him catch you."

"That's true," replied Bumper, "but I might not be able to avoid him. Is he as quick as Mr. Fox?"

"Oh, dear, no! You can easily outrun him. He's so clumsy he falls over his own big feet sometimes, and he makes such a noise you can hear him coming a mile away."

"Then I don't believe I'm afraid of him," replied Bumper, in a voice of relief.

When he started out on his travels he felt pretty good, and on the way he stopped to eat every time he found something he knew was good for him. He avoided all strange plants, and ate only those he recognized.

[Pg 102]

In a short time he came to such thick woods that if it hadn't been for the deer trail he would have been lost, but he followed Rusty's directions, and kept strictly to the well-worn path. When he grew tired, he rested by the wayside, always hiding in the thick bushes, and keeping one eye and both ears open. There were many strange and wonderful noises in the woods, and more than once Bumper started up with fright.

But nothing happened to him until he was so far in the woods that he thought the big rock must be near. He kept a sharp lookout for it. Just then he heard a noise so different from anything that had startled him before that he stopped to listen. It seemed as if some one was in great pain, and needed help.

Now Bumper was very tender-hearted, and any one in distress made him very sad. So instead of keeping on the trail, he wandered off to find out who was moaning so loudly.

And what he beheld was enough to make any rabbit laugh! It was Buster the Bear fast asleep, snoring as if he enjoyed it. Bumper was frightened at first by the sight of the big, shaggy head and body, but when he recalled Rusty's words, and saw that Buster was sleeping, he stopped and laughed. It was a sight to make any one laugh.

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Buster's big, shaggy body rose and fell with every breath, and each time a loud snore came from his half open mouth. It sounded like a wheezy pair of bellows trying to play a tune. Bumper had never heard anything like it in his life.

While he stood off at a safe distance watching, a bumblebee lighted on Buster's nose and tickled it. The bear brushed it off with a paw, and rolled over to renew his sleep. But, unfortunately for Buster, he whacked the bee so hard that he must have hurt it.

Anyway, the bumblebee resented it, and gave him a sharp sting on the nose. The effect was startling. Buster came to life with a jump, and let out a loud:

"B-r-r-r! Whoof!"

The ground seemed to tremble as he struggled to his feet, and swung his huge paws at the bee. But the bumblebee, having accomplished its purpose, calmly flew away. Buster rubbed his smarting nose, and growled angrily.

Suddenly he caught sight of Bumper grinning at him. He stopped rubbing his nose to stare and blink at the white rabbit. Bumper, now that he was discovered, ceased grinning, and began to feel afraid.

"You think it very funny, don't you?" growled Buster, his little eyes flashing. "I wish he'd stung you instead of me. Drat the old bumblebees! I wonder what they're made for!"

[Pg 104]

"I'm sure I couldn't tell you," replied Bumper, in an unsteady voice.

"What do you suppose you're made for?" continued Buster, eyeing him queerly.

"Why—to—make little boys and girls happy, I suppose," Bumper stammered.

Buster grinned at this stammering remark. Then, with a leer, he added: "No, that isn't the reason. It's something else. Want me to tell you?"

"Why, yes, I'd like to know."

"Well, then, it's to give Mr. Fox right back of you a good meal."

Bumper gave a jump of nearly three feet when he heard this. He didn't suppose the fox was anywhere near, and the thought that he was right behind, ready to spring upon him, sent the blood racing through his body. But when he turned, expecting to see dripping jaws about to close upon his neck, he was surprised and then puzzled. There was no fox in sight. However, he wasn't to be deceived, if Mr. Fox was hiding, and he stood ready to spring away, his body quivering with fright, and his pink eyes dilated.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Buster the Bear in a deep rumble, rolling over on his fat sides. "Ho! Ho! Ho! What a scare I gave you! Now we're quits. The joke's on you!"

[Pg 105]

It took Bumper some time to realize that it was only a joke, and not a near tragedy for him. Finally he turned a shamed, embarrassed face toward Buster, and grinned good-naturedly.

"The next time I see any one in trouble," he said, "I won't laugh at him, Mr. Bear. You've taught me a good lesson."

"Well, that's what I call taking a joke in the proper spirit," smiled Buster. "I'm sorry I gave you such a shock."

"And I'm sorry I laughed when the bee stung your nose."

"Oh, as for that, I didn't mind the sting so much as the interruption of my sleep." Buster rubbed his nose as he spoke. Then he added, addressing the white rabbit:

"Where are you bound? You must be lost. I never saw a white rabbit out of the city before."

"Were you ever in the city?" asked Bumper, eagerly.

"Sure! I was in the Zoo for a whole year until I escaped."

"Then you know something how I feel. The country's very strange to me, and I feel a bit lonesome. Could you tell me where my country cousins live—the wild rabbits?"

[Pg 106]

"Yes," replied Buster, "but I'm not sure they'll welcome your coming. However, you can find them by following that trail a little further until you come to a big rock. They live under it where Mr. Fox can't get them."

"Thank you," replied Bumper. "I think I'll be going, then. I must find them before night."

STORY XV

BUMPER FINDS HIS COUNTRY COUSINS

After leaving Buster the Bear, Bumper did not have far to go before he stumbled upon the rock under which the wild rabbits had their burrow. It was a big, towering rock right in the middle of the woods, with trees trying to grow on top of it, and under it, as if they were determined to lift it and roll it away.

When the white rabbit first saw it his heart beat high with expectation. This was to be the end of his journey. When he found it impossible to get back to the garden where the red-headed girl lived, he concluded the best he could do was to join the wild rabbits and live with them. They would teach him the ways of the woods, and perhaps, in time he would be happy and content as a member of their family.

In spite of the dangers and ventures that had marked his progress, he was greatly pleased with the woods, and the freedom he enjoyed appealed to him. But to make his happiness complete he needed companions and friends of his own kind.

[Pg 108]

The friendship of the birds was all right, but they had their own families to look after, and besides, he could not always depend upon having them near.

It was natural that he should be a bit homesick and lonely without other rabbits to associate with. He often thought of Jimsy and Wheedles, and of his mother and of Topsy. Any one of them would be welcome. In his newly-acquired knowledge of the woods and its inhabitants, he felt that he could give Jimsy and Wheedles pointers that would make their eyes open.

When he reached the big rock, he hopped all around it, looking for the entrance to the rabbit burrow, and sniffing the ground expectantly. There were many signs that rabbits had recently been there, but he could find nothing that looked like a burrow. Around and around the big rock he hopped, sniffing, pounding with his hind feet, and calling to his cousins. But there was no response.

"Perhaps they're all out," he reflected finally, "and I'd better rest on the top of the rock until they return."

He scrambled to the summit of the rock and sprawled out full length to watch and wait. From his high position, he could see any one approaching from any direction. The sun found its way down through the trees and lit up the top of the rock, and, feeling very tired, Bumper fell asleep.

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He was aroused from this suddenly by the breaking of a twig near-by. He raised his head and looked around. Not a dozen feet away from him was a wild rabbit, one of his country cousins. Now, Bumper had never met a wild rabbit before, and this one certainly looked very dirty and uncouth compared to himself. The only white he had was under his throat and belly. The rest of him was a dull gray and brown.

"Hello, Cousin!" Bumper called softly.

The approaching rabbit stopped and looked around, his two ears raised straight up in the air. Then his quick eyes saw Bumper on the top of the rock. Whether he took him for a ghost or some strange, dangerous animal, no one could say; but he turned swiftly and disappeared in the bushes.

"Don't be afraid, Cousin!" Bumper called loudly. "I'm Bumper the White Rabbit, and I've come to visit you!"

But this had no effect whatever on the wild rabbit. Bumper could hear him scurrying away in the bushes. Then all was quiet. For a long time Bumper watched and waited. Once he caught a glimpse of his cousin on the right of the rock, then on the left, then behind, and again in front. The amazing rapidity with which the wild rabbit changed his position surprised Bumper.

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It was not until after he had caught sight of two heads simultaneously peeping above the bushes did he realize that the rabbit was not alone. Then he caught sight of a third head, then of a fourth, and of a fifth. The whole burrow of rabbits was circled around him, watching him either in fear or curiosity. Bumper thought it was a good time to make a speech.

"Cousins," he began, rearing upon his hind legs, "I've come a long distance to visit you. I've always lived in the city, but I got lost, and if it hadn't been for the birds and Buster the Bear I would never have found my way here. I hope you will welcome me, and let me live with you. I'm lonesome and homesick for friends and companions."

He supposed this speech would have a good effect, and he waited eagerly for one of the wild rabbits to respond. But they were quiet for so long that he felt despondent. Then, to his surprise, a big rabbit rose near-by, and turned to his companions.

"Beware!" he said. "It's a trick of Mr. Fox! We must run for it altogether!"

[Pg 111]

Bumper didn't know just what the speaker meant by this last sentence. But he soon found out.

There was a rush and scramble in the bushes all around him, and then a dozen or more rabbits appeared. They came toward the rock like an army closing in upon the enemy, leaping over bushes or crawling through the underbrush.

For a moment Bumper was startled. He had a vision of being attacked on all sides by his country cousins and driven ignominiously from the woods. But his anxiety was of short duration. The rabbits reached the side of the rock, and disappeared as if by magic.

Then Bumper understood. They had made a simultaneous rush for their burrow, knowing that this was the safest place for them. When the last rabbit had disappeared, Bumper hopped down, and began looking for the entrance. There was certainly an entrance to the burrow, or his cousins couldn't have disappeared so quickly.

Bumper searched on every side for over an hour, but so artfully concealed was the entrance to the burrow that he was unsuccessful. There was no noise under the rock—nothing to indicate that there were rabbits there.

Discouraged and down-hearted, he was nearly ready to give up when he happened to poke his head in the hollow end of a tree whose roots were pinioned down by the huge rock. The small heart of the trunk had decayed, offering an entrance just large enough for a rabbit to squeeze through. [Pg 112]

Bumper thought this would be a safe place for him to spend the night, and he began crawling through. The hole followed the trunk of the tree downward for some distance. Then suddenly it turned sharply to the right.

At this point Bumper met an unexpected challenge. A big, gray rabbit at the other end of the hollow trunk thumped hard with his two hind feet, and instantly there was an uproar. Bumper had accidentally found his way into the burrow through the hollow tree trunk!

"Stop where you are!" the rabbit guarding the hole shouted. "What do you want in here?"

"I want to greet my cousins. If you don't let me come in Mr. Fox will catch me after dark. I have no other home."

"You're not a rabbit!" replied the other. "We have no white cousins. There're no white rabbits in the world."

"But I'm one," returned Bumper, amused by the same cry that had been made by the crow and birds.

There was silence inside, followed by a buzz of many voices. Finally a weak, trembling voice said authoritatively: [Pg 113]

"Admit him! It can't be Mr. Fox in disguise, for he could never crawl through that hole. Admit him so I can talk to him."

Evidently the speaker was one in authority, for the other instantly obeyed, and Bumper was allowed to hop through the hole into the burrow.

STORY XVI

BUMPER BECOMES THE WHITE KING OF THE RABBITS

[Pg 114]

What Bumper saw and smelt when he hopped into the burrow under the rocks made a great impression upon his mind. It was a large burrow directly under the huge rock, with no other entrance to it than the one through the hollow tree trunk. No wonder the fox couldn't reach the rabbits! They were as well protected from him as if they lived in a house of stone.

There were all sizes of rabbits around him—little ones scarcely able to hop around without falling over, big, husky fellows with fierce looking muzzles and eyes, and very old ones who seemed too feeble to move very fast. But it was the one who had commanded the others to let Bumper in that attracted his attention the most.

He had been a big, stalwart rabbit at one time, and his frame was still large and angular, but age had shrunken his body and haunches, and his cheeks were thin and wrinkled. The eyes stared straight at Bumper as though they would go right through him. It was not until later that Bumper understood it was blindness that made that stare seem so penetrating. [Pg 115]

"Tell me your name again!" this old patriarch said when Bumper stood trembling before him.

"Bumper the White Rabbit!"

The old one hopped nearer, using one of his companions as a guide.

"Is it true," he asked finally, turning to the others, "that he's white?"

"Yes," they all responded in chorus.

"No gray or brown hairs on him?"

"No gray or brown hairs on him."

"Be sure!" commanded the old leader. "Lick them to see if the gray shows underneath."

Several obeyed this order, and Bumper felt as if he was being washed all over, so vigorously did the tongues of his cousins lick him to discover any fraud.

"He still remains white," one of the rabbits said finally. "There are no gray or brown hairs underneath."

"That is well!" ejaculated the blind leader. "Now tell me the color of his eyes."

"Pink!" they cried.

"Ah!" The blind rabbit seemed suddenly excited and trembled with emotion. "Pure white, you say, and pink eyes! Is he a young rabbit, or very, very old?"

[Pg 116]

"He is young, no older than Piggy."

"Then it must be true," murmured the old blind patriarch. "It must be true."

The others were all quiet, and waited for their wise, blind leader to speak again. This he did after a long pause.

"Years ago," he began slowly, "there was a white rabbit who was sent to us as a leader. He was the wisest and shrewdest and bravest of our kind. Where he came from no one knew. We made him king, and he ruled wisely and well for many years. He died before I was born, and that you know was a long time ago. Before he died he told us that some day another white rabbit, with pink eyes, would come to us, and his coming would be as strange and unknown as his."

The speaker stopped and seemed to weigh his words. All the rabbits held their breaths, and glanced from the blind leader to Bumper.

"When he came—this white rabbit, with pink eyes—we were to receive him and make him our king and leader. His wisdom would be greater than that of all ours combined, and in time he would deliver us from our enemies. You know how it is with us in the woods here. We're the meekest and most innocent of the wild animals. Even the birds prey upon us at times, and Mr. Fox and Buster the Bear hold us in contempt because we cannot defend ourselves. We would live on friendly terms with all the wild creatures of the woods, but they won't let us."

[Pg 117]

He sighed, and then continued: "Our only weapon is our teeth, but we never use them except to chew our food. Yet they are as sharp as those of the Squirrel, and nearly as long as those of the Fox. Yet we don't know how to use them in defence, or if we do we're too timid to attempt it. We're cowardly, and easily get frightened so that our enemies kill us without danger to themselves. They all hold us in contempt here in the woods."

This remarkable speech made many of the rabbits drop their heads in dejection, for the truth of it was all too well known to them.

"But this new leader and king was to deliver us from our fear and timidity," the blind speaker continued. "He was to show us how we could make friends with all through his wisdom and foresight. We have been waiting for him for many, many years, and now that he has come we should be glad and joyful. Let us do homage to Bumper the White Rabbit, for he is our new leader and king! I am happy to live to see the day come when I could welcome him! My only regret is that age has blinded me, and I cannot see him with my own eyes. I could die in peace then!"

[Pg 118]

With that the blind, old rabbit humbled himself before Bumper and kissed one of his paws. This apparently was the signal for all the others to do likewise. They came to him in turn, and promised to follow and obey his word, secretly admiring his white fur and pink eyes.

To Bumper this sudden change of hostility to abject admiration and worship was embarrassing. His mind was all in a whirl, and when the others knelt before him and kissed his paw he could find no words to say. He simply smiled as graciously as he could, and accepted the homage in silence.

Without knowing it this was the correct thing to do. It was more impressive than if he had protested or tried to explain that there was a mistake. He was almost king-like in his attitude without trying to be so.

It all seemed like a dream to him. He was led away to the choicest sleeping part of the burrow, and attendants brought him food and drink. There was always some one to wait on him no matter what he wanted to do. It was slightly embarrassing at first, but, as the novelty of it wore off he accepted the situation with a smile.

"If they take me for their king, why not act the part?" he asked himself. "I believe I could do it. I certainly look more like a king than any of the others. And I'm prettier than any of my cousins."

[Pg 119]

Bumper was in danger of getting intolerably conceited, and for a time he showed it; but his better sense came to his rescue finally.

"If I'm going to be their king and leader," he concluded, "I'll try to be a wise and good one. I'll not disappoint them. I'll listen to Mr. Blind Rabbit, and when I know all he does I'll try to use the knowledge for the good of all the rabbits in the woods."

So Bumper the White Rabbit did not regret his loss of the red-headed girl and the beautiful garden, for in becoming the king of the wild rabbits he had a greater career before him, and how well he acquitted himself in that position we shall see in future stories, in the book entitled

"Bumper the White Rabbit in the Woods."

WHITE TAIL'S ADVENTURES

STORY I

WHITE TAIL JUMPS STEPPING STONE BROOK

White Tail grew rapidly in size and strength, his long, clean limbs showing taut muscles and great springing power; and his neck grew thick and short, which is well for a buck, who must use it in savage thrusts when the head is a battering ram. His horns were short and bony, but they protruded in front like knobs against which it would be unpleasant to fall.

But his antlers were his pride. They spread out fan-shape on his head, crowning it with a glory that made Mother Deer supremely happy. At times it seemed as if the antlers were too heavy for the head and neck, but White Tail carried them easily, and when he shook them in sport or anger any one could see they were just fitted to him.

In time he stood as high as Father Buck, and a head taller than Mother Deer. The day the tip of his antlers reached an inch above Father Buck's, he felt a little thrill of pride.

The continuation of this interesting story will be found in
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WASHER THE RACCOON

STORY ONE

WASHER'S FIRST ADVENTURE

Washer was the youngest of a family of three Raccoons, born in the woods close to the shores of Beaver Pond, and not half a mile from Rocky Falls where the water, as you know, turns into silvery spray that sparkles in the sun-shine like diamonds and rubies. And, indeed, the animals and birds of the North Woods much prefer this glittering spray and foam that rise in a steady cloud from the bottom of the falls to all the jewels and gems ever dug out of the earth! For, though each drop sparkles but a moment, and then vanishes from sight, there are a million others to follow it, and when you bathe in them they wash and scour away the dirt, and make you clean and fresh in body and soul.

Washer had his first great adventure at Rocky Falls, and it is a wonder that he ever lived to tell the tale, for the water which flows over the falls is almost as cruel and terrible as it is sparkling and inviting. But...

The continuation of this interesting story will be found in
WASHER THE RACCOON
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WHITE TAIL THE DEER

STORY I

WHITE TAIL'S FIRST LESSON

High among the timberland of the North Woods White Tail the Deer was born, and if you had stumbled upon his home in the thickets you would have been surprised by a noise like the

rushing of the wind, and then by a very remarkable silence that could almost be felt. The first was made by Mother White Tail as she deserted her young and took to quick flight.

White Tail, crouching low down in the bushes, so still that he scarcely moved a hair, would hide his beautiful head in the branches and leaves like an obedient child. Left alone he knew that his one chance of escape was not to move or whimper or cry.

That was the first lesson White Tail was taught by his mother—to keep absolutely quiet in the presence of danger. When he was so small that he could hardly hold up his head, she whispered to him: "Listen, White Tail! When I give the signal that the hunters are coming, you must flatten yourself down..."

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BUSTER THE BIG BROWN BEAR'S ADVENTURES

STORY I

BUSTER VISITS HIS BIRTHPLACE

Buster's return to the North Woods, after his many travels in different parts of the country as a trick bear in a circus, was an important event to him. He had been away so long—ever since he was a little cub—that nothing seemed familiar to him. His recollection of the river that flowed in front of the cave where he had been born was very dim and uncertain, and he was not sure which way to go when he had crossed it.

Brownny the Woodchuck had informed him that he was in the North Woods when he waded up on shore, but Brownny had an important engagement with his family, and immediately left him. Happy and excited that he was now free in the woods, and no longer in danger of being pursued and captured, Buster for a time was satisfied in roaming around in the bushes, eating the wild fruit and berries.

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BOBBY GRAY SQUIRREL'S ADVENTURES

STORY I

AN ADVENTURE WITH DASHER THE HAWK

When Bobby Gray Squirrel left the deserted house where he had spent the winter with Stripe the Chipmunk and Web the Flying Squirrel, not to mention White Foot the Deer Mouse, he was in a very serious mood, and his first thought was to go right to work to build a home for himself in some friendly tree, and stock it early with nuts for winter use.

His experience that winter, before he had found his fortune in the bag of nuts in the tower room, had made him very thoughtful. "I'm not going to put off work again that should be done to-day," he said to himself as he frisked along from tree to tree. "I can't expect to have such good luck another winter. But my!"—smiling in recollection—"those nuts were delicious!"

He smacked his lips at the thought, and right on top of it came the low trill of a bird. It was Goldy the Oriole, who had just returned north.

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BUSTER THE BIG BROWN BEAR

STORY I

WHEN BUSTER WAS A CUB

In the North Woods where Buster was born, a wide river tinkles merrily over stones that are so white you'd mistake them for snowballs, if you were not careful, and begin pelting each other with them. The birches hanging over the water look like white sticks of peppermint candy, except in the spring of the year when they blossom out in green leaves, and then they make you think of fairyland where everything is painted the colors of the rainbow.

The rocks that slope up from the bank of the river are dented and broken as if some giant in the past had smashed them with his hammer, cracking some and punching deep holes in others. It was in one of these holes, or caves, that Buster was born.

He didn't mind the hard rocky floor of his bed a bit, nor did he mind the darkness, nor the cold winds that swept through the open doorway. He was so well protected by his...

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BUMPER THE WHITE RABBIT AND HIS FRIENDS

STORY I

BUMPER AND SLEEPY THE OPOSSUM

Bumper, after working hard to trick his enemies so they would be more afraid of the rabbits in the woods, had decided the ways of peace were better than those of war. Not that he was going to permit Sneaky the Wolf or Loup the Lynx to pounce upon his people and eat them up without fighting, but instead of going around with a chip on his shoulder, expecting and looking for trouble, he intended to make friends of all the animals and birds, and be helpful to them.

It is wonderful how much good to others we can overlook if we go about with our eyes shut. There is plenty to do if we look for it. So Bumper found in a short time that he had missed a good deal in always looking for the worst in others instead of for the best.

Only a few days after his change of plans, which was told of in a former book, Bumper stumbled upon Sleepy the Opossum in a tree, with his eyes closed in slumber. At first he...

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BOBBY GRAY SQUIRREL

BOBBY'S INTRODUCTION

There are many squirrels living in the North Woods, but only one real Bobby Gray Squirrel, and if you saw him once you would never mistake him for any other. Bobby was a gay, rollicking happy-go-lucky fellow, who believed in enjoying himself to-day and letting the morrow take care of itself. He wasn't exactly lazy, but he didn't believe in doing work that wasn't actually necessary, and sometimes, I'm afraid, he forgot to do what was really necessary.

Bobby had many friends in the woods, and they all liked him and smiled at him, but there were some who thought his careless ways might get him in trouble some day. So instead of chattering pleasantly with him, they shook their heads and preached to him.

"Why don't you get busy these pleasant days, Bobby, and store up food for the winter?" Gray Back the Weasel asked reprovingly one bright, sunny day.

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BUMPER THE WHITE RABBIT IN THE WOODS

STORY I

BUMPER HUNTS WITH THE PACK

Bumper the White Rabbit, when he escaped from Edith, the red-headed girl who owned the garden where he lived, found his way into the woods, and, after many adventures with the Bats, the Crow, the Fox and Buster the Bear, he was adopted by the wild rabbits as their leader and king. The Old Blind Rabbit welcomed him, and told the story of how it was prophesied that some day a pure white rabbit, with pink eyes, would come to deliver them from their enemies, and teach them how to live in the woods without fear of danger.

No one had been more surprised than Bumper at this sudden welcome. At first he was for telling them he was no leader, and not fit to be their king; but, as he was very lonely and without a...

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BUMPER THE WHITE RABBIT AND HIS FOES

STORY I

BUMPER PLANS TO FIGHT HIS ENEMIES

Now in the reign of King Bumper and Queen Fuzzy Wuzz many things happened in the woods that made exciting times for the wild rabbits and their friends. They came to pass in the first year of their reign, for Bumper the white rabbit was not content to be idle when his people were surrounded by so many enemies that their lives were never safe.

Some kings just eat and drink and make merry the live long day, and forget all about duty; but lots of such kings have lost their thrones, and others who have ruled wisely have been blessed with many friends, and when they died all the people mourned their loss.

Bumper the white rabbit intended to be a good and wise ruler, and therefore he spent much time in trying to think of ways to help his wild cousins of the woods. The story of how he escaped from the garden owned by the...

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Transcriber's Notes

1. Punctuation has been normalized to contemporary standards.
2. Frontispiece illustration relocated to after title page.

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