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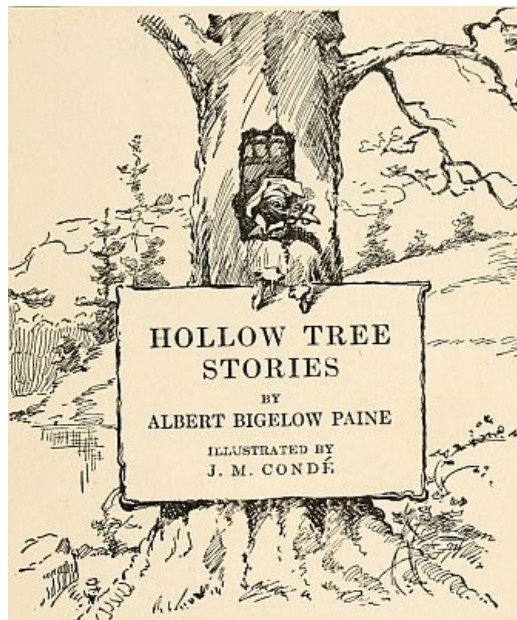
*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HOW MR. RABBIT LOST HIS TAIL ***



[\[See page 94\]](#)

SET UP HIS EARS AND WENT BY, LICKETY SPLIT

HOW MR. RABBIT LOST HIS TAIL



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

HOLLOW TREE STORIES

BY

ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE

HOW MR. DOG GOT EVEN
HOW MR. RABBIT LOST HIS TAIL
MR. RABBIT'S BIG DINNER
MR. TURTLE'S FLYING ADVENTURE
MAKING UP WITH MR. DOG
MR. POSSUM'S GREAT BALLOON TRIP
WHEN JACK RABBIT WAS A LITTLE BOY
MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH
MR. RABBIT'S WEDDING

HOLLOW TREE AND DEEP WOODS BOOK
HOLLOW TREE SNOWED-IN BOOK
HOLLOW TREE NIGHTS AND DAYS

HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK

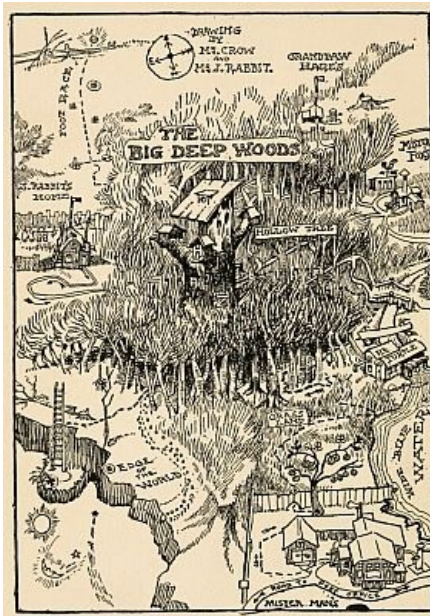
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**MAP OF THE HOLLOW TREE AND
DEEP WOODS COUNTRY**

EXPLANATION OF MAP

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

MR. DOG PLAYS SANTA CLAUS

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A STORY TOLD WHEN IT WAS SNOWING OUTSIDE, AND THE LITTLE LADY WAS WONDERING HOW IT WAS IN THE FAR DEEP WOODS

ONCE upon a time, said the Story Teller, the Robin, and Turtle, and Squirrel, and Jack Rabbit had all gone home for the winter, and nobody was left in the Hollow Tree except the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow. Of course the others used to come back and visit them pretty often, and Mr. Dog, too, now that he had got to be good friends with all the Deep Woods People, and they thought a great deal of him when they got to know him better. Mr. Dog told them a lot of things they had never heard of before, things that he'd learned at Mr. Man's house, and maybe that's one reason why they got to liking him so well.

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He told them about Santa Claus, for one thing, and how the old fellow came down the chimney on Christmas Eve to bring presents to Mr. Man and his children, who always hung up their stockings for them, and Mr. Dog said that once he had hung up his stocking, too, and got a nice bone in it, that was so good he had buried and dug it up again as much as six times before spring. He said that Santa Claus always came to Mr. Man's house, and that whenever the children hung up their stockings they were always sure to get something in them.

Well, the Hollow Tree people had never heard of Santa Claus. They knew about Christmas, of course, because everybody, even the cows and sheep, know about that; but they had never heard of Santa Claus. You see, Santa Claus only comes to Mr. Man's house, but they didn't know that, either, so they thought if they just hung up their stockings he'd come there, too, and that's what they made up their minds to do. They talked about it a great deal together, and Mr. 'Possum looked over all his stockings to pick out the biggest one he had, and Mr. Crow made himself a new pair on purpose. Mr. 'Coon said he never knew Mr. Crow to make himself such big stockings before, but Mr. Crow said he was getting old and needed things bigger, and when he loaned one of his new stockings to Mr. 'Coon, Mr. 'Coon said, "That's so," and that he guessed they were about right after all. They didn't tell anybody about it at first, but by and by they told Mr. Dog what they were going to do, and when Mr. Dog heard it

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HE TOLD THEM ALL ABOUT SANTA CLAUS

his pictures at Mr. Man's house, and he thought it would be great fun to dress up that way and take a bag of presents to the Hollow Tree while they were all asleep and fill up the stockings of the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow. But first he had to be sure of some way of getting in, so he said to them he didn't see how they could expect Santa Claus, their chimneys were so small, and Mr. Crow said they could leave their latch string out down stairs, which was just what Mr. Dog wanted. Then they said they were going to have all the folks that had spent the summer with them over for Christmas dinner and to see the presents they had got in their stockings. They told Mr. Dog to drop over, too, if he could get away, and Mr. Dog said he would, and went off laughing to himself and ran all the way home because he felt so pleased at what he was going to do.

Well, he had to work pretty hard, I tell you, to get things ready. It wasn't so hard to get the presents as it was to rig up his Santa Claus dress. He found some long wool out in Mr. Man's barn for his white whiskers, and he put some that wasn't so long on the edges of his overcoat and boot tops and around an old hat he had. Then he borrowed a big sack he found out there, too, and fixed it up to swing over his back, just as he had seen Santa Claus do in the pictures. He had a lot of nice things to take along. Three tender young chickens he'd borrowed from Mr. Man, for one thing, and then he bought some new neckties for the Hollow Tree folks all around, and a big, striped candy cane for each one, because candy canes always looked well sticking out of a stocking. Besides all that, he had a new pipe for each, and a package of tobacco. You see, Mr. Dog lived with Mr. Man, and didn't ever have to buy much for himself, so he had always saved his money. He had even more things than that, but I can't remember just now what they were; and when he started out, all dressed up like Santa Claus, I tell you his bag was pretty heavy, and he almost wished before he got there that he hadn't started with quite so much.



IT GOT HEAVIER AND HEAVIER

It got heavier and heavier all the way, and he was glad enough to get there and find the latch string out. He set his bag down to rest a minute before climbing the stairs, and then opened the doors softly and listened. He didn't hear a thing except Mr. Crow and Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum breathing pretty low, and he knew they might wake up any minute, and he wouldn't have been caught there in the midst of things for a good deal. So he slipped up just as easy as anything, and when he got up in the big parlor room he almost had to laugh right out loud, for there were the stockings sure enough, all hung up in a row, and a card with a name on it over each one telling who it belonged to.

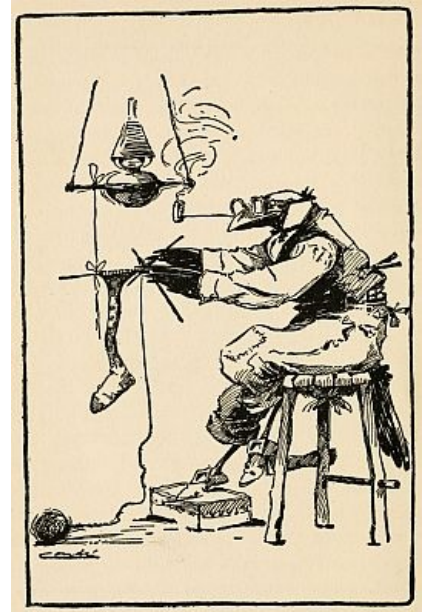
Then he listened again, and all at once he jumped and held his breath, for he heard Mr. 'Possum say something. But Mr. 'Possum was only talking in his sleep, and saying, "I'll take another piece, please," and Mr. Dog knew he was dreaming about the mince pie he'd had for supper.

So then he opened his bag and filled the stockings. He put in mixed candy and nuts and little things first, and then the pipes and tobacco and candy canes, so they'd show at the top, and hung a nice dressed chicken outside. I tell you, they looked fine! It almost made Mr. Dog wish he had a stocking of his own there to fill,

he wanted to laugh right out. You see, he knew Santa Claus never went anywhere except to Mr. Man's house, and he thought it would be a great joke on the Hollow Tree people when they hung up their stockings and didn't get anything.

But by and by Mr. Dog thought about something else. He thought it would be too bad for them to be disappointed that way. You see, Mr. Dog liked them all, now, and when he had thought about that a minute he made up his mind to do something. And this is what it was—he made up his mind to play Santa Claus!

He knew just how Santa Claus looked, 'cause he'd seen lots of



MR. CROW MADE HIMSELF A NEW PAIR ON PURPOSE

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and he forgot all about them waking up, and sat down in a chair to look at the stockings. It was a nice rocking chair, and over in a dark corner where they wouldn't be apt to see him, even if one of them did wake up and stick his head out of his room, so Mr. Dog felt pretty safe now, anyway. He rocked softly, and looked and looked at the nice stockings, and thought how pleased they'd be in the morning, and how tired he was. You've heard about people being as tired as a dog; and that's just how Mr. Dog felt. He was so tired he didn't feel a bit like starting home, and by and by—he never did know how it happened—but by and by Mr. Dog went sound asleep right there in his chair, with all his Santa Claus clothes on.



TO SEE MR. DOG JUMP RIGHT STRAIGHT UP OUT OF HIS CHAIR

And there he sat, with his empty bag in his hand and the nice full stockings in front of him, all night long. Even when it came morning and began to get light Mr. Dog didn't know it; he just slept right on, he was that tired. Then pretty soon the door of Mr. 'Possum's room opened and he poked out his head. And just then the door of Mr. 'Coon's room opened and he poked out *his* head. Then the door of the Old Black Crow opened and out poked *his* head. They all looked toward the stockings, and they didn't see Mr. Dog, or even each other, at all. They saw their stockings, though, and Mr. 'Coon said all at once:—

"Oh, there's something in my stocking!"

And then Mr. Crow said:—

"Oh, there's something in my stocking, too!"

And Mr. 'Possum said:—

"Oh, there's something in all our stockings!"

And with that they gave a great hurrah all together, and rushed out and grabbed their stockings and turned around just in time to see Mr. Dog jump right straight up out of his chair, for he did not know where he was the least bit in the world.

"Oh, there's Santa Claus himself!" they all shouted together, and made a rush for their rooms, for they were scared almost to death. Then it all dawned on Mr. Dog in a second, and he commenced to laugh and hurrah to think what a joke it was on everybody. And when they heard Mr. Dog laugh they knew him right away, and they all came up and looked at him, and he had to tell just what he'd done and everything; so they emptied out their stockings on the floor and ate some of the presents and looked at the others, until they almost forgot about breakfast, just as children do on Christmas morning.

Then Mr. Crow said, all at once, that he'd make a little coffee, and that Mr. Dog must stay and have some, and by and by they made him promise to spend the day with them and be there when the Robin and the Squirrel and Mr. Turtle and Jack Rabbit came, which he did.



IT WAS SNOWING HARD OUTSIDE, WHICH MADE IT A NICER CHRISTMAS THAN IF IT HADN'T BEEN

And it was snowing hard outside, which made it a nicer Christmas than if it hadn't been, and when all the others came they brought presents, too. And when they saw Mr. Dog dressed up as Santa Claus and heard how he'd gone to sleep and been caught, they laughed and laughed. And it snowed so hard that Mr. Dog had to stay for dinner, which he wanted to do more than anything,

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HE ALMOST HAD TO LAUGH RIGHT OUT LOUD

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MR. DOG AT THE CIRCUS

THE HOLLOW TREE PEOPLE LEARN SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT ABOUT SHOWS

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

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THE PANTRY IN THE HOLLOW TREE

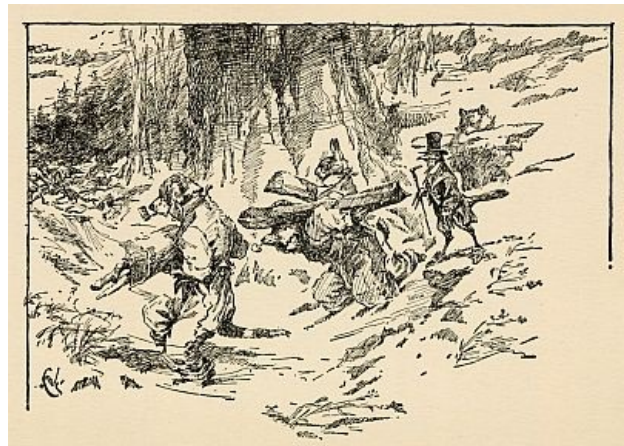
Then, when they were all through and were standing around, smoking their new pipes and looking at each other's new neckties and other Christmas things, Mr. Crow said that he and Mr. Squirrel would clear off the table if the others would get in some wood and stir up the fire and set the room to rights,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

So then they all skurried around getting on their things to go out after wood—all except Mr. Crow and Mr. Squirrel, who set about clearing off the table and doing up the dishes. And pretty soon Mr. Dog and Mr. 'Coon and the rest were hopping about where the snow was falling so soft and silent among the big, leafless trees, gathering nice pieces of wood and brushing the snow off of them and piling them into the first down stairs of the Hollow

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Tree, which the 'Coon and 'Possum and Old Black Crow use for their wood house and general store room. It was great fun, and they didn't feel the least bit cold after their warm dinner and with all that brisk exercise.

Mr. Robin didn't help carry the wood in. He was hardly strong enough for that, but he hopped about and looked for good pieces, and when he found one he would call to Mr. 'Coon or Mr. 'Possum, or maybe to one of the others, to throw it on his shoulder and carry it in, and then he would tell whoever it happened to be how strong he was and how fine he looked with that great chunk on his shoulder, and would say that he didn't suppose there was another 'Coon, or 'Possum, or Turtle, or Rabbit, or Dog that could begin to stand up straight under such a chunk as that anywhere outside of a menagerie. Mr. Robin likes to say pleasant things to his friends, and is always popular. And each one tried to carry the biggest load of wood to show how strong he was, and pretty soon they had the lower room of the Hollow Tree piled up high with the finest chunks and kindling pieces to be found anywhere.



MR. ROBIN HOPPED ABOUT AND LOOKED FOR GOOD PIECES

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Then they all hurried up stairs, stamping the snow off their feet, and gathered around the nice warm fire in the big parlor which was just below the three big hollow branches where the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow had their rooms.

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

Mr. 'Possum was the first one to say anything. He said he had been thinking of what Mr. Robin had said about them being outside of a menagerie, and that, come to think about it, he believed

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he didn't know what a menagerie was, unless it was a new name for a big dinner, as that was the only thing he could think of now that they were outside of, and he said if that was so, and if he could get outside of two menageries, he thought he could carry in a bigger chunk than any two chunks there were down stairs.

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

But Mr. Robin said that it didn't mean either of those things. He said he didn't really know what it did mean himself, but that it must be some kind of a place that had a great many large creatures in it, for he had quite often heard his grandmother call his grandfather the biggest goose outside of a menagerie, though, being very young then, Mr. Robin couldn't remember just what she had meant by it. [30]

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

Mr. Squirrel thought that from what Mr. Crow said it must be a place where there would be a lot of fine things to see, and Mr. Turtle said that he was a good deal over three hundred years old and had often heard of a menagerie, but that he had never seen one. He said he had always supposed that it was a nice pond of clear water, with a lot of happy turtles and fish and wild geese and ducks and such things, in it, and maybe some animals around it, all living happily together, and taken care of by Mr. Man, who brought them a great many good things to eat. He had always thought he would like to live in a menagerie, he said, but that nobody had ever invited him, and he had never happened to come across one in his travels. [31]

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

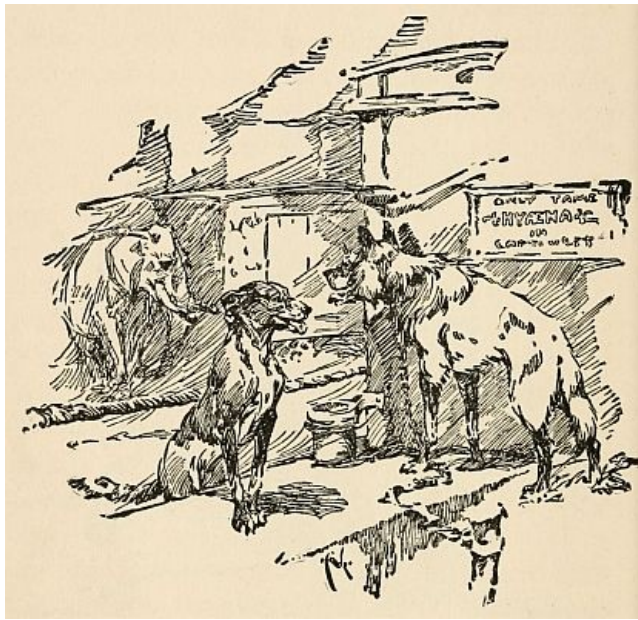


SLIPPED IN BEHIND HIM WHEN HE WENT INTO THE TENT

"I know all about menageries, on the outside and the inside too, for I have been to one. I went once with Mr. Man, though I wasn't really invited to go. In fact, Mr. Man invited me to stay at home, and tried to slip off from me; but I watched which way he went, and took long roundin's on him, and slipped in behind him when he went into the tent. He didn't know for a while that I was there, and I wasn't there so very long. But it was plenty long enough—a good deal longer than I'd ever stay again, unless I was tied. [32]

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

"I kept in the crowd, close behind Mr. Man at first, and nobody knew I was there, but by and by he climbed up into a seat to watch some people all dressed up in fancy clothes ride around a ring on horses, which I didn't care much about, so I slipped away, and went over to where there were some things that I wanted to take my time to and see quietly. [35]



**"HE LOOKED SMILING AND GOOD-NATURED, AND
I WENT OVER TO ASK HIM SOME QUESTIONS"**

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

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

"I suppose they thought *he* was tame, too, but he must have been tamed by the same man, for he grabbed me with a kind of a tail that grew on the end of his nose—a thing a good deal like Mr. 'Possum's tail, only about a million times as big—and I could hear my ribs crack as he waved me up and down. [36]

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

"Mr. Man *came*, too, and so did a lot of the others. They seemed to think that I was more to look at than those riding people; and some of them laughed, though what there was happening that was funny I have never been able to guess to this day. I kept right on telling Mr. Man what I wanted him to do, and mebbe I made a good deal of noise about it, for it seemed to stir up those other animals. There was a cage full of lions that started the most awful roaring you can think of, and a cage of crazy-looking things they called monkeys that screeched and howled and swung back and forth in rings and held on to the bars, and all the other things joined in, until I couldn't tell whether I was still saying anything or not. I suppose they were all jealous of the elephant because of the fun he was having, and howling to be let out so they could get hold of me too. [37]

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

"But Mr. Man didn't seem to like it much. I heard him tell somebody, as loud as he could, that I would be killed, and that I was the best dog he ever had, and that if I *was* killed he'd sue the show. [38]

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

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

"After that he took me to the entrance and pushed me outside, and I heard all those fierce creatures in the cages growl and roar louder than [40]

ever, as if they had expected to sample me and were sorry to see me go.

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

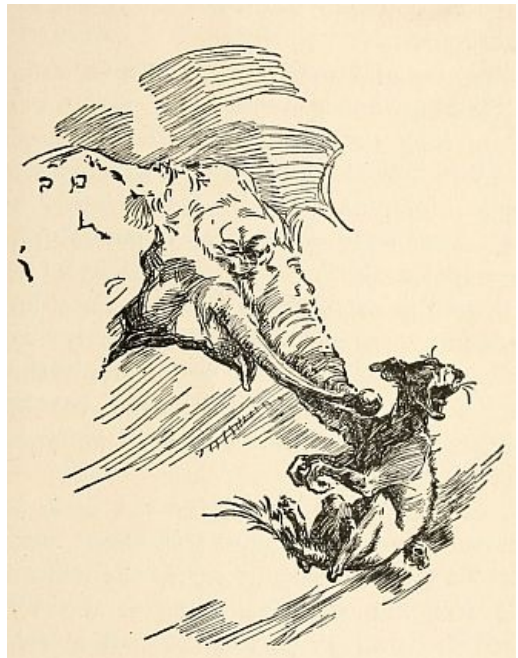
"They just keep them for Mr. Man and his friends to look at and talk about, and if Mr. Turtle will take my advice he will keep out of a menagerie and live in the Wide Blue Water where he was born. I wouldn't have gone there again unless I had been dragged there by force, or unless they had put those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

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

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

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

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



"GAVE ME AN EXTRA BIG SWING AND CRACK"

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WHEN MR. 'COON WAS A LITTLE BOY

[45]

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

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

Why, yes, let me see—says the Story Teller.

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

[46]

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

"No, they had just done that."

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

MR. 'COON'S EARLY ADVENTURE

Mr. 'Coon said he was quite young when it happened, and was taking a pleasant walk one evening, to think over things a little, and perhaps to pick out a handy tree where Mr. Man's chickens roosted, when all at once he heard a



**ALL AT ONCE HE HEARD A FIERCE BARK
CLOSE BEHIND HIM**

how much he tried. So I scrooched down and laid low in that old nest, and didn't move or let on in any way that I was there.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

fierce bark close behind him, and he barely had time to get up a tree himself when a strange and very noisy Mr. Dog was leaping about at the foot of the tree, making a great fuss, and calling every moment for Mr. Man to hurry, for he had a young 'coon treed.

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

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

"Of course that made me mad. I hadn't cared so much until I saw that; but I said right then to myself that any one who would do such a thing as that never could be a friend of mine, no matter

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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"THEN I SUDDENLY FELT LIKE A SHOOTING-STAR"



THEN MR. DOG SAID, "TELL ME ANOTHER"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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of the top and cure him. So the man with the pain in his chest tried it, and he did it this way.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

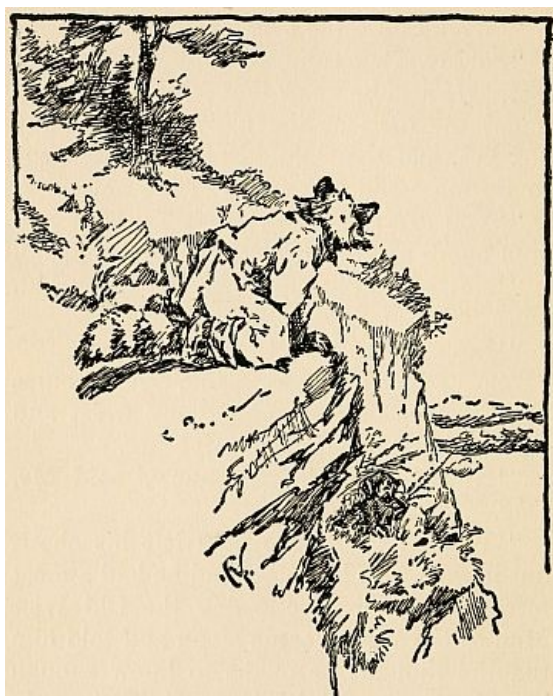
"No, of course not, Mr. Dog,' I said, more pleasant and polite than ever.

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

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

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

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



AND DID ROLL OFF THE EDGE OF THE WORLD, SURE ENOUGH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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"I SET OUT FOR HOME WITHOUT
WAITING TO SAY GOOD-BYE"

stories and having a good time on Christmas Day."

The Story Teller looks down at the Little Lady.

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

Very glad, says the Story Teller.

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

He did that!

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

Ever so much faster, says the Story Teller.

HOW MR. RABBIT LOST HIS TAIL

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MR. RABBIT TELLS SOME INTERESTING FAMILY HISTORY

THE Little Lady waited until the Story Teller had lit his pipe and sat looking into the great open fire, where there was a hickory log so big that it had taken the Story Teller and the Little Lady's mother with two pairs of ice tongs to drag it to the hearth and get it into place. Pretty soon the Little Lady had crept in between the Story Teller's knees. Then in another minute she was on one of his knees, helping him rock. Then she said:—

"Did Mr. Rabbit tell his story next? He promised to tell about losing his tail, you know."

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The Story Teller took his pipe from his mouth a moment, and sat thinking and gazing at the big log, which perhaps reminded him of one of the limbs of the Hollow Tree where the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow lived and had their friends visit them that long-ago snowy Christmas-time.

Why, yes, he said, that's so, Mr. Rabbit *did* tell that story. When Mr. 'Coon got through telling how he came near getting into a menagerie, they all said that it certainly was a very narrow escape, and Mr. 'Coon said he shouldn't wonder if that menagerie had to quit business, just because he wasn't in it; and Mr. 'Possum said he thought if anything would *save* a menagerie that would, for it would keep them from being eaten out of house and home.

Then Mr. 'Coon said that if that was so, Mr. 'Possum had saved at least three menageries by staying right where he was in the Big Deep Woods. This made Mr. Squirrel and Mr. Robin laugh, and the rest wondered what those two gigglers had noticed that was funny. Then they all knocked the ashes out of their pipes again, and walked over to the window, and looked at the snow banking up outside and piling up on the bare limbs of the big trees. They said how early it got dark this time of year, especially on a cloudy day. And pretty soon Mr. Crow said they had just about time for one more story before supper, and that Mr. Rabbit ought to tell now about how, a long time ago, his family had lost their tails. Mr. Rabbit didn't seem to feel very anxious to tell it, but they told him that he had promised, and that now was as good a time as any, so they went back and sat down, and Mr. Rabbit told them

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THE TRUE STORY OF THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE, AND HOW JACK RABBIT LOST HIS TAIL

"Once upon a time," he said, "a great many great-grandfathers back, my family had long bushy tails, like Mr. Squirrel and Mr. Fox, only a good deal longer and finer and softer, and *very handsome*."

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When Mr. Rabbit said that, Mr. Squirrel sniffed and twitched his nose and gave his nice bushy tail a flirt, but he didn't say anything. Mr. Rabbit went right on.

"Well, there was one fine, handsome rabbit who had the longest and plumiest tail of any of the family, and was very proud of it. He was my twenty-seventh great-grandfather, and was called

'Mr. Hare.' He was young and smart then, and thought he was a good deal smarter than he really was, though he was smart enough and handsome enough to set the style for all the other rabbits, and not much ever happened to him, because he could beat anything running that there was in the Big Deep Woods.

"That twenty-seventh great-grandfather of mine was very proud of his running, and used to brag that in a foot race he could beat anything that lived between the Wide Grass Lands and the edge of the world. He used to talk about it to almost everybody that came along, and one day when he met one of the Turtle family who used to be called 'Mr. Tortoise' in those days, he stopped and began to brag to him how fast he could run and how nobody in the Big Deep Woods dared to race with him.

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"But Mr. Turtle he just smiled a little and said: 'Oh, pshaw! You can't run very fast. I believe I can beat you myself!'

"Well, that did make Grandfather Hare laugh—and made him a little mad, too.

'You!' he said. 'Why, I'll give you within ten yards of that rail fence of Mr. Man's half a mile away, and then beat you across it. Just travel along, and some time this afternoon, when you get down that way, I'll come back and let you see me go by. But you'll have to look quick if you see me, for I'll be going fast.'

"But Mr. Tortoise said he didn't want any start at all, that he was ready to begin the race right then; and that made Grandpaw Hare laugh so loud that Mr. Fox heard him as he was passing, and came over to see what the fun was. Then he said that he hadn't much to do for a few minutes, and that he'd stay and act as judge. He thought a race like that wouldn't last long; and it didn't, though it wasn't at all the kind of a race he had expected.



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MR. FOX SAID HE HADN'T MUCH TO DO FOR A FEW MINUTES, AND HE'D ACT AS JUDGE

"Well, he put Mr. Tortoise and my twenty-seventh great-grandfather side by side, and then he stood off and said, 'Go!' and thought it would all be over in a minute.

"Grandpaw Hare gave one great big leap, about twenty feet long, and then stopped. He was in no hurry, and he wanted to have some fun with Mr. Tortoise. He looked around to where Mr. Tortoise was coming straddling and panting along, and he laughed and rolled over to see how solemn he looked, and how he was travelling as if he meant to get somewhere before dark. He was down on all fours so he could use all his legs at once, and anybody would think, to look at him, that he really expected to win that race.

"The more my Grandpaw Hare looked at him the more he laughed, and then he would make another long leap forward and stop, and look back, and wait for Mr. Tortoise to catch up again.

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"Then he would call to him, or maybe go back and take roundin's on him, and say: 'Come along there, old tobacco box. Are you tied to something?' Mr. Fox would laugh a good deal, too, and he told my ancestor to go on and finish the race—that he couldn't wait around there all day. And pretty soon he said if they were going to fool along like that, he'd just go down to the fence and take a nap till they got there; and for Grandpaw Rabbit to call to him when he really started to come, so he could wake up and judge the finish.

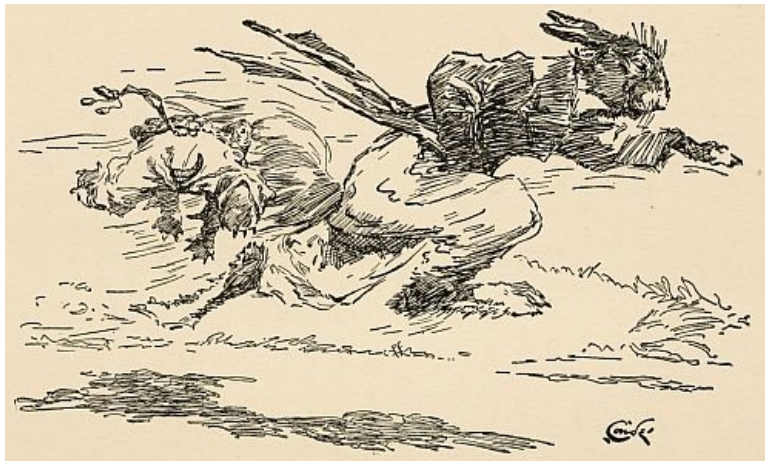
"Mr. Fox he loped away to the fence and laid down and went to sleep in the shade, and Grandpaw Hare thought it would be fun to pretend to be asleep, too. I've heard a story told about it that says that he really did go to sleep, and that Mr. Tortoise went by him and got to the fence before he woke up. But that is not the way it happened. My twenty-seventh great-grandfather was too smart to go to sleep, and even if he had gone to sleep, Mr. Tortoise made enough noise pawing and scratching along through the grass and gravel to wake up forty of our family.

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"My ancestor would wait until he came grinding along and was up even with him, then suddenly he'd sit up as if he'd been waked out of a nice dream and say: 'Hello, old coffee mill! What do you want to wake me up for when I'm trying to get a nap?' Then he would laugh a big laugh and make another leap, and lie down and pretend again, with his fine plummy tail very handsome in the sun.

"But Grandpaw Hare carried the joke a little too far. He kept letting Mr. Tortoise get up a little closer and closer every time, until Mr. Tortoise would almost step on him before he would move. And that was just what Mr. Tortoise wanted, for about the next time he came along he came right up behind my ancestor, but instead of stepping on him, he gave his head a quick snap, just as if he were catching fish, and grabbed my Grandpaw Hare by that beautiful plummy tail, and held on, and pinched, and my ancestor gave a squeal and a holler and set out for that rail fence, telling his troubles as he came.

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SAILING ALONG, JUST TOUCHING THE HIGHEST POINTS

"Mr. Fox had gone sound asleep and didn't hear the rumpus at first, and when he did he thought Grandpaw was just calling to him to wake up and be ready to judge the race, so he sat up quick and watched them come. He saw my twenty-seventh great-grandfather sailing along, just touching the highest points, with something that looked like an old rusty washpan tied to his tail.

"When Mr. Fox saw what it was, he just laid down and laughed and rolled over, and then hopped up on the top rail and called out, 'All right, I'm awake, Mr. Hare! Come right along, Mr. Hare. You'll beat him yet!'

"Then he saw my ancestor stop and shake himself, and paw, and roll over, to try to get Mr. Tortoise loose, which of course he couldn't do, for, as we all know, whenever any of the Turtle family get a grip they never let go till it thunders, and this was a bright day. So pretty soon Grandpaw was up and running again, with Mr. Tortoise sailing out behind and Mr. Fox laughing to see them come, and calling out: 'Come right along, Mr. Hare! Come right along! You'll beat him yet!'

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AWAY WENT MR. TORTOISE, CLEAR OVER THE TOP RAIL

"But Mr. Fox made a mistake about that. Grandpaw Hare was really ahead, of course, when he came down the homestretch, but when he got pretty close to the fence he made one more try to get Mr. Tortoise loose, and gave himself and his tail a great big swing, and Mr. Tortoise didn't let go quite quick enough, and off came my twenty-seventh great-grandfather's beautiful plummy tail, and away went Mr. Tortoise with it, clear over the top rail of the fence, and landed in a brier patch on the other side.

"Well, Grandpaw Hare was in such a state as you never heard of! He forgot all about the race at first, and just raved about his great loss, and borrowed Mr. Fox's handkerchief to tie up what was left, and said that he never in the world could show his face before folks again.

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"And Mr. Fox stopped laughing as soon as he could, and was really quite sorry for him, and even Mr. Tortoise looked through the fence, and asked him if he didn't think it could be spliced and be almost as good as ever.

"He said he hadn't meant to commit any injury, and that he hoped Mr. Hare would live to forgive him, and that now there was no

reason why my grandpaw shouldn't beat him in the next race.

"Then my ancestor remembered about the race and forgot his other loss for a minute, and declared that Mr. Tortoise didn't win the race at all—that he couldn't have covered that much ground in a half a day alone, and he asked Mr. Fox if he was going to let that great straddle bug ruin his reputation for speed and make him the laughing stock of the Big Deep Woods, besides all the other damage he had done.

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"Then Mr. Fox scratched his head, and thought about it, and said he didn't see how he could help giving the race to Mr. Tortoise, for it was to be the first one across the fence, and that Mr. Tortoise was certainly the first one across, and that he'd gone over the top rail in style.



SET OUT FOR HOME BY A BACK WAY

"Well, that made Grandpaw Hare madder than ever. He didn't say another word, but just picked up his property that Mr. Tortoise handed him through the fence, and set out for home by a back way, studying what he ought to do to keep everybody from laughing at him, and thinking that if he didn't do something he'd have to leave the country or drown himself, for he had always been so proud that if people laughed at him he knew he could never show his face again.

"And that," said Mr. Rabbit, "is the true story of that old race between the Hare and the Tortoise, and of how the first Rabbit came to lose his tail. I've never told it before, and none of my family ever did; but so many stories have been told about the way those things happened that we might just as well have this one, which is the only true one so far as I know."

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Then Mr. Rabbit lit his pipe and leaned back and smoked. Mr. Dog said it was a fine story, and he wished he could have seen that race, and Mr. Turtle looked as if he wanted to say something, and did open his mouth to say it, but Mr. Crow spoke up, and asked what happened after that to Mr. Rabbit's twenty-seventh great-grandfather, and how it was that the rest of the Rabbits had short tails, too.

Then Mr. Rabbit said that that was another story, and Mr. Squirrel and Mr. Robin wanted him to tell it right away, but Mr. Crow said they'd better have supper now, and Mr. 'Possum thought that was a good plan, and Mr. 'Coon, too, and then they all hurried around to get up some sticks of wood from down stairs, and to set the table, and everybody helped, so they could get through early and have a nice long evening.

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And all the time the snow was coming down outside and piling higher and higher, and it was getting too dark to see much when they tried to look out the window through the gloom of the Big Deep Woods.

HOW THE OTHER RABBITS LOST THEIR TAILS

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MR. JACK RABBIT CONTINUES HIS FAMILY HISTORY

"**D**ID they have enough left for supper—enough for all the visitors, I mean?" asks the Little Lady the next evening, when the Story Teller is ready to go on with the history of the Hollow Tree.

Oh, yes, they had plenty for supper, and more, too. They had been getting ready a good while for just such a time as this, and had carried in a lot of food, and they had a good many nice things down in the store room where the wood was, but they didn't need those yet. They just put on what they had left from their big dinner, and Mr. Crow stirred up a pan of hot biscuits by his best receipt, and they passed them back and forth across the table so much that Mr. 'Possum said they went like hot cakes, sure enough, and always took two when they came his way.

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And they talked a good deal about the stories that Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Rabbit had told them, and everybody thought how sly and smart Mr. 'Coon had been to fool Mr. Dog that way; and Mr. 'Coon said that, now he came to think it over, he supposed it was a pretty good trick, though it really hadn't seemed so specially great to him at the time. He said he didn't think it half as smart as Mr. Tortoise's trick on Mr. Rabbit's Grandpaw Hare, when he beat him in the foot race and went over the fence first, taking Mr. Hare's tail with him. And then they wondered if that had all really happened as Mr. Rabbit had told it—all but Mr. Turtle, who just sat and smiled to himself and didn't say anything at all, except "Please pass the biscuits," now and then, when he saw the plate being set down in front of Mr. 'Possum.

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Then by and by they all got through and hurried up and cleared off the table, and lit their pipes, and went back to the fire, and pretty soon Jack Rabbit began to tell

HOW THE REST OF THE RABBITS LOST THEIR TAILS

"Well," he said, "my twenty-seventh great-grandfather Hare didn't go out again for several days. He put up a sign that said 'Not at Home' on his door, and then tried a few experiments, to see what could be done.

"He first tried to splice his property back into place, as Mr. Tortoise had told him he might, but that plan didn't work worth a cent. He never could get it spliced on straight, and if he did get it about right, it would lop over or sag down or something as soon as he moved, and when he looked at himself in the glass he made up his mind that he'd rather do without his nice plummy brush altogether than to go out into society with it in that condition.

"So he gave it up and put on some nice all-healing-ointment, and before long what there was left of it was well, and a nice bunch of soft, white cottony fur had grown out over the scar, and Grandpaw Hare thought when he looked at himself in the glass that it was really quite becoming, though he knew the rest of his family would always be saying things about it, and besides they would laugh at him for letting Mr. Tortoise beat him in a foot race.



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HE TRIED TO SPLICE HIS PROPERTY BACK IN PLACE



GRANDFATHER WOULD LIGHT HIS PIPE AND THINK IT OVER

"Sometimes, when there was nobody around, my grandfather would go out into the sun and light his pipe and lean up against a big stone, or maybe a stump, and think it over.

"And one morning, as he sat there thinking, he made up his mind what he would do. Mr. Lion lived in the Big Deep Woods in those days, and he was King. Whenever anything happened among the Deep Woods People that they couldn't decide for themselves, they went to where King Lion lived, in a house all by himself over by the Big West Hills, and he used to settle the question; and sometimes, when somebody that wasn't very old, and maybe was plump and tender, had done something that wasn't just right, King Lion would look at him and growl and say it was too bad for any one so young to do such things, and especially for them to grow up and keep on doing them; so he would have him for breakfast, or maybe for dinner, and that would settle everything in the easiest and shortest way.

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"Of course Grandfather Hare knew very well that Mr. Tortoise and Mr. Fox wouldn't go with him to King Lion, for they would be afraid to, after what they had done, so he made up his mind to go alone and tell him the whole story, because he was as sure as anything that King Lion

would decide that he had really won the race, and would be his friend, which would make all the other Deep Woods People jealous and proud of him again, and perhaps make them wish they had nice bunches of white cottony fur in the place of long dragging tails that were always in the way.

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"And then some day he would show King Lion where Mr. Fox and Mr. Tortoise lived.

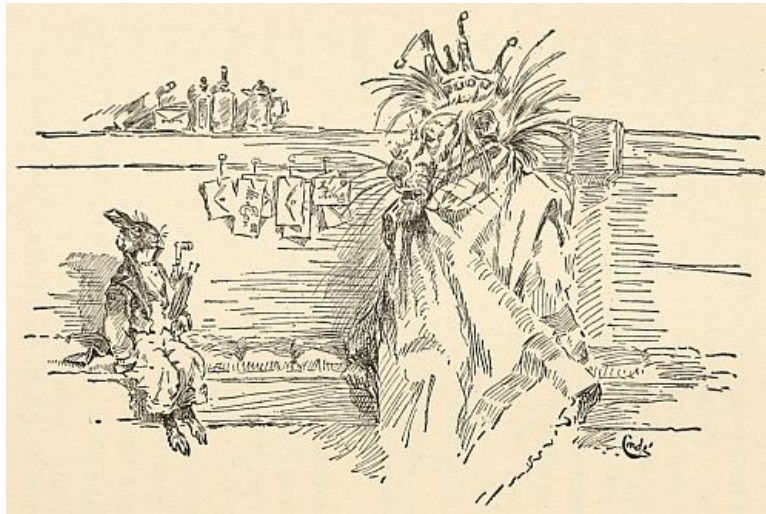
"My Grandfather Hare didn't stop a minute after he thought of that, but just set out for King Lion's house over at the foot of the Big West Hills. He had to pass by Mr. Fox's house, and Mr. Fox called to him, but Grandpaw Hare just set up his ears as proud as could be and went by, lickety split, without looking at Mr. Fox at all.

"It was a good way to King Lion's house, but Grandpaw Hare didn't waste any time, and he was there almost before he knew it.

"When he got to King Lion's door he hammered on the knocker, and when nobody came right away he thought maybe the King was out for a walk. But that wasn't so. King Lion had been sick for two or three days, and he was still in bed, and had to get up and get something around him before he could let Grandpaw in.

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"Grandpaw Hare had sat down on the steps to wait, when all at once the door opened behind him and he felt something grab him by the collar and swing him in and set him down hard on a seat, and then he saw it was King Lion, and he didn't much like his looks.



"GLAD TO SEE YOU," SAID KING LION; "I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT HAVING A RABBIT FOR BREAKFAST"

"So it was you, was it, making that noise?' he said. 'Well, I'm glad to see you, for I was just thinking about having a nice rabbit for breakfast.'

"Then my twenty-seventh great-grandfather knew he'd made a mistake, coming to see King Lion when he was feeling that way, and he had to think pretty quick to know what to say. But our family have always been pretty quick in their thoughts, and Grandpaw Hare spoke right up as polite as could be, and said he would do anything he could to find a nice young plump rabbit for King Lion, and that he would even be proud to be a king's breakfast himself, only he wasn't so very young nor so very plump, and, besides, there was that old prophecy about the king and the cotton-tailed rabbit, which of course, he said, King Lion must have heard about.

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"Then King Lion said that my twenty-seventh great-grandfather was plenty young enough and plenty plump enough, and that he'd never heard of any prophecy about a cotton-tailed rabbit, and that he'd never heard of a cotton-tailed rabbit, either.

"Then Grandpaw Hare just got up and turned around, and as he turned he said, as solemnly as he could:—

"When the King eats a hare with a cotton tail,
Then the King's good health will fail.'

"Well, that scared the King a good deal, for he was just getting over one sick spell, and he was afraid if he had another right away he'd die, sure. He sat down and asked Grandpaw Hare to tell him how he came to have a tail like that, and Grandpaw told him, and it made the King laugh and laugh, until he got well, and he said it was the best joke he ever heard of, and that he'd have given some of the best ornaments off of his crown to have seen that race.

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"And the better King Lion felt the hungrier he got, and when my Grandfather Hare asked him if he wouldn't decide the race in his favor, he just glared at him and said if he didn't get out of there and hunt him up a nice, young, plump, long-tailed rabbit, he'd eat him—cotton tail, prophecy, and all—for he didn't go much on prophecies, anyway.

"Then Grandpaw Hare got right up and said, 'Good day,' and backed out and made tracks for the rest of his family, and told them that King Lion had just got up from a sick spell that had given him an appetite for long-tailed rabbits. He said that the King had sent him out to get one, and that King Lion would most likely be along himself pretty soon. He said the sooner the Rabbit

family took pattern after the new cotton-tailed style the more apt they'd be to live to a green old age and have descendants.

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"Well, that was a busy day in the Big Deep Woods. The Rabbit family got in line by a big smooth stump that they picked out for the purpose, and Grandpaw borrowed a hatchet and attended to the job for them, and called out 'Next!' as they marched by. He didn't have to wait, either, for they didn't know what minute King Lion might come. Mr. Tortoise and Mr. Fox came along and stopped to see the job, and helped Grandpaw now and then when his arm got tired, and by evening there was a pile of tails by that stump as big as King Lion's house, and there never was such a call for the all-healing-ointment as there was that night in the Big Deep Woods.

"And none of our family ever did have tails after that, for they never would grow any more, and all the little new rabbits just had bunches of cotton, too, and that has never changed to this day."

"And when King Lion heard how he'd been fooled by Grandpaw Hare with that foolish prophecy that he just made up right there, out of his head, he knew that everybody would laugh at him as much as he had laughed at Mr. Hare, and he moved out of the country and never came back, and there's never been a king in the Big Deep Woods since, so my twenty-seventh great-grandfather did some good, after all.

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"And that," said Mr. Rabbit, "is the whole story of the Hare and the Tortoise and how the Rabbit family lost their tails. It's never been told outside of our family before, but it's true, for it's been handed down, word for word, and if Mr. Fox or Mr. Tortoise were alive now they would say so."

Mr. Rabbit filled his pipe and lit it, and Mr. Crow was just about to make some remarks when Mr. Turtle cleared his throat and said:—

"The story that Mr. Rabbit has been telling is all true, every word of it—I was there."

Then all the Deep Woods People took their pipes out of their mouths and just looked at Mr. Turtle with their mouths wide open, and when they could say anything at all, they said:—

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"*You were there!*"

You see, they could never get used to the notion of Mr. Turtle's being so old—as old as their twenty-seventh great-grandfathers would have been, if they had lived.

"Yes," said Mr. Turtle, "and it all comes back to me as plain as day. It happened two hundred and fifty-eight years ago last June. They used to call us the Tortoise family then, and I was a young fellow of sixty-seven and fond of a joke. But I was surprised when I went sailing over that fence, and I didn't mean to carry off Mr. Hare's tail. Dear me, how time passes! I'm three hundred and twenty-five now, though I don't feel it."

Then they all looked at Mr. Turtle again, for though they believed he was old, and might possibly have been there, they thought it pretty strange that he could be the very Mr. Tortoise who had won the race.

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Mr. 'Possum said, pretty soon, that when anybody said a thing like that, there ought to be some way to prove it.

Then Mr. Turtle got up and began taking off his coat, and all the others began to get out of the way, for they didn't know what was going to happen to Mr. 'Possum, and they wanted to be safe; and Mr. 'Possum rolled under the table, and said that he didn't mean anything—that he loved Mr. Turtle, and that Mr. Turtle hadn't understood the way he meant it at all.

But Mr. Turtle wasn't the least bit mad. He just laid off his coat, quietly, and unbuttoned his shirt collar, and told Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow to look on the back of his shell.

And then Mr. Dog held a candle, and they all looked, one after another, and there, sure enough, carved right in Mr. Turtle's shell, were the words:—

BEAT MR. HARE
FOOT RACE
JUNE 10, 1649

"That," said Mr. Turtle, "was my greatest joke, and I had it carved on my shell."

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And all the rest of the forest people said that a thing like that was worth carving on anybody's shell that had one, and when Mr. Turtle put on his coat they gave him the best seat by the fire, and sat and looked at him and asked questions about it, and finally all went to sleep in their chairs, while the fire burned low and the soft snow was banking up deeper and deeper, outside, in the dark.



Transcriber's Note:

Duplicate chapter titles were removed.

Illustrations were moved from their original location. They are now located more closely to the text that forms the caption.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HOW MR. RABBIT LOST HIS TAIL ***

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