

**THE
LITTLE
BEAR**
**WHO RAN
AWAY FROM
BRUINTOWN**



FRANK VER BECK



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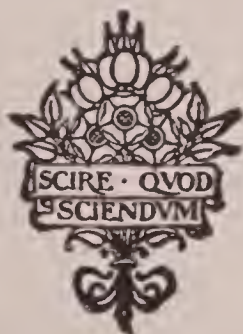
THE LITTLE BEAR WHO
RAN AWAY FROM BRUINTOWN



"The sad-hearted much abused little Bear quietly stole away through the dark woods"

THE LITTLE BEAR WHO RAN AWAY FROM BRUINTOWN

BY
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I

IN a deep green wood, once upon a time there lived a Little Bear. The poor little fellow was an orphan and lived with a lot of big bears, some medium-sized bears and a great many small bears. They all dwelt together in a place called Bruintown.

Now this particular Little Bear was not at all happy. One reason he was not happy was because both the medium-sized bears and the other little bears teased and abused him. They called him "Booby-cry-baby" and he, being an orphan, had no one to take his part against his cruel tormentors.

Sometimes the little fellow showed pluck and tried to defend himself. He would bite, and

kick, and scratch, until the bullies cried for help. Then the medium-sized bears would pitch into him, and the poor Little Bear hadn't a chance in the world. But what he hated worst of all was when some big she-bear—mother of one of the cubs—would add to his other troubles by pulling his ears. And the louder he cried the harder his ears were pulled, until his courage was all gone and his ears were a whole lot too large.

It wasn't any wonder that Elmer (Elmer was the Little Bear's name, although he did not like it) was so discouraged that one day he threatened to run away from Bruintown.

“Some d-dark night,” sobbed Elmer, “I-I'll wa-walk off over the m-mon-mountain and go on and on un-until I fi-find the place where m-my nice old g-grandma lives.”

For this threat Elmer got his ears pulled again and one of the medium-sized bears beat him most unmercifully while the rest of his tormentors laughed and jeered.

That night the Little Bear could not sleep, his right fore paw hurt, his left hind paw hurt, his nose was swollen and both ears ached. Much ear-pulling had so stretched his scalp that he could not close his eyes and poor Elmer did not sleep a wink.

So the sad-hearted, much-abused Little Bear quietly stole away through the great, dark woods. He passed a big gnarled chestnut-tree where some raccoons lived. Further on he passed the rocky den where Old Brother Fox dwelt with his vixen and her fox pups. He nearly tumbled into a stream where a family of muskrats were having a heated discussion; he was about to enquire the way to his grandma's home but the frightened muskrats quickly dived and missed hearing a word Elmer said. The Little Bear trudged on and on, hoping to meet some one who might be able to give him tidings of his old Granny.

“I suppose I'm lost,” thought he, “but I don't care a rap, and, come to think, I'm really glad

of it, for anything that may happen cannot be worse than what has already been done to me in Bruintown, that beastly ——.” Here Elmer nearly said a bad word.

The thoughts of all he had suffered started him crying, so he sat down and had a real good old-fashioned cry, until he happened to think how lucky he was to be off there alone with no big she-bear near by to pull his ears. This thought so pleased the Little Bear that he wanted to laugh. Laughing was not much in his line; still, he managed to do a kind of chuckle which developed into a missy-sissy schoolgirl giggle. Afterward he cried some more, louder even than his first good cry. Elmer cried for joy; he cried because he was hungry; he cried because he was not a big grizzly bear who could walk into Bruintown and whip all the she-bears, and thump all the medium-sized bears, and roundly spank every last one of the little bears who had been so mean to him; last

of all, he cried because his name was Elmer.

Afterward he chuckled and giggled because he had determined to change his name. Elmer was his Bruintown name and he was thoroughly sick of it. So he decided that, hereafter, he would call himself "Teddy." By that time he was very sleepy and his eyes that were before so dreadfully starey, on account of so much ear-pulling, were now so swollen by crying and giggling that he could easily close them, so Teddy (let's call him Teddy if it pleases him) went to sleep and never dreamed a thing.



"Wý, How 'do, Elmer!
It's a Coons age since I done
met up wid yo'"

II

IT was nearly daylight when Elmer (or Teddy, as he is now called) was awakened by feeling one of his ears being gently pulled. He instantly jumped to an upright position. There, right in front of him, stood Old Brother 'Possum. The 'Possum himself was so frightened by Teddy's quick jump that he closed his small eyes and tumbled over backwards, for all the world like he had been struck dead. But El— (beg pardon) Teddy was not fooled, for he very well knew the ways of Old Mr. 'Possum and all his make-believe tribe. So the Little Bear bent over the prostrate form of the early caller, and, taking his limp paw, gave it a hearty shake, saying:

“How-de-doo, Brother 'Possum!”

But the Old 'Possum at first never moved. By and by he slyly lifted an eyelid ever so little,

then closed it again and lay perfectly still for a minute until Teddy said:

“Oh, wake up, old man! It’s going to be a fine day and I’m Jack-whoopin’ glad to see you.”

“Jack-whoopin’ ” must have been a kind of password understood by the Old ’Possum, for he quickly jumped up and heartily shook paws with Teddy, only he called him Elmer.

“W’y, how-de-doo Elmer! ’Clare to goodness it’s a coon’s age since I done met up wid yo’. How d’s yo’ corporosity shegatiate?”

(We imagine, by Mr. ’Possum’s way of talking, that he must have been born down south near a negro cabin and learned to talk by listening to the language of colored people.)

Teddy did not know what answer was expected of him, so he only smiled good-naturedly. Mr. ’Possum next asked:

“How come yo’ visitin’ these parts, Elmer? Was yo’ got lost, stray’d or stolen, or was yo’ jes’ kicked outen Bruintown?”

The Little Bear did not half like the way Mr. 'Possum spoke and, as he felt his hair and anger rising at the same time, he told Mr. 'Possum it was none of his business how he happened to leave Bruintown, "and besides," said he, "I'd have you know that my name is now Teddy and not Elmer any more. I threw my Elmer name away last night after I left Bruintown, because I don't like it."

"'Scuse me, Mr. Teddy," apologized the 'Possum. "It's 'mos' daylight now an' de time all good 'possums hunt dar nest and take dar rest." He bowed politely as he said: "good day, sah! I mus' be jebsin' along."

"Please hold on a minute, do sit down and listen," urged the Little Bear. "I'm so sorry that my spoiled temper caused me to hurt your feelings. You see, the Bruintown bears hectorred and pestered me, and slapped and kicked me; they teased and bit me and starved me until I'm now cross as a bear.

“Do you know, Brother ’Possum, the mean old she-bears pulled my ears until they are nearly as big as—well, just look at them yourself.”

Mr. ’Possum slowly opened his eyes and looked but did not laugh.

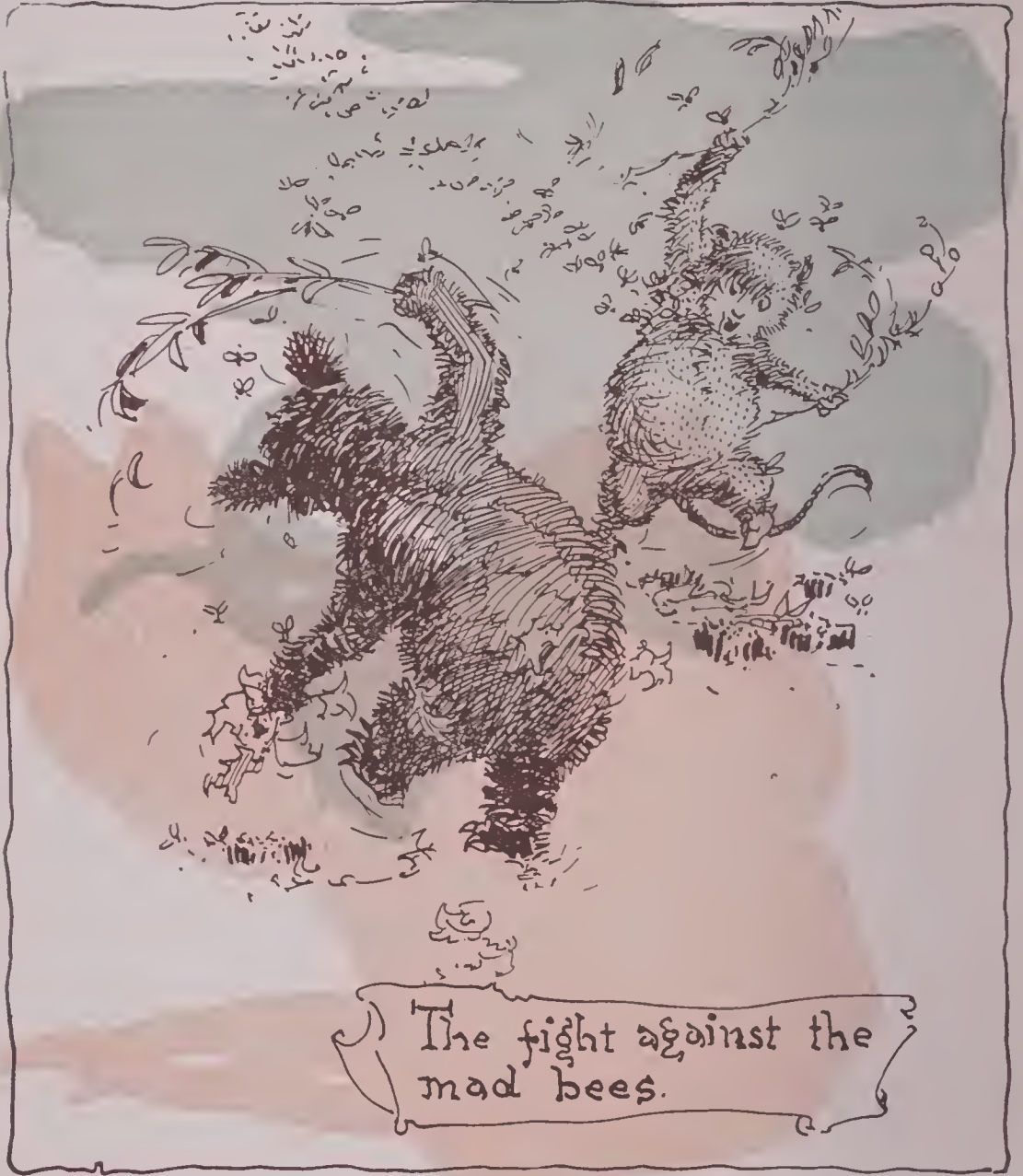
“The big he-bears,” continued Teddy, “used to kick me around like a football. The medium-sized bears sat on me and tumbled me about and played log-rolling with me until I was ’most dead. Then they’d carry me down to the creek and duck me until I was nearly drowned. Afterwards they’d stand me on my head until I was drained out. Then, I’m blest if they wouldn’t pitch on me and do it all over again. Oh, I’m so fighting, squealing mad,” raged Teddy, “when I think of it all, that I’d like to eat a lot, a big lot, and grow up to be as big as a big Ji-as-ti-cu-tus, with muscles as hard as cocoanuts, and then go back to Bruintown and—”

Just then Old Mr. ’Possum missed a cog in his

steady snore, which caused the Little Bear to turn and look at him. The peaceful sight caused Teddy to forget his bygone troubles, so he bent over close and cried real loud into Old Brother 'Possum's left ear:

“Jack-whoopin'!! Chickens! Cut-cut-ca-dad-cut! Get your hair cut!”

The Old 'Possum instantly waked up.



The fight against the mad bees.

III

“DID yo’ expostulate somepin’?” said Old Brother ’Possum, who was now wide-awake and staring at Teddy.

“Oh, never mind, ’twas of no consequence,” said the Little Bear. “I may have been thinking out loud, as I do sometimes, of my past life in Bruintown. I wish to goodness I could forget all about it. Please, Mr. ’Possum, won’t you help me try to forget about—well, all about those stirring times?”

“Yess’r! I will with all m’ might, ’fi c’n keep awake when yo’ begin prevar’catin’ an’ relatin’ ’bout ’em,” answered the obliging ’Possum.

“I don’t quite understand all your last remark,” complained Teddy. “Still, let it pass, I know you meant all right. By the way, ’Pos, I’m hungry as a wolf.”

“And *I* do be hungry as a bear,” said the

'Possum, "my po' in'ards hab misery and done collapse fo' de la'k o' nour'shment."

So, guided by hunger, both the Little Bear and Mr. 'Possum went in search of an early breakfast. The wise Provider for all never intended these wild creatures to starve. They were free to make the great deep woods their home and go where hunger or pleasure led them. The Old 'Possum had first-rate luck catching beetles in a dry rotten log. He also found some choice white grubs, while Teddy was equally fortunate in finding some ripe strawberries. Next he discovered a sarvas (June berry) bush and called to Brother 'Possum, who was busy catching a few snapping bugs. The Old 'Possum came running and joined Teddy in the sarvas feast. They both ate and ate and thought and ate, and just ate and did not think a thought until they could hold no more.

In a near-by large chestnut-tree Mr. 'Possum spied an inviting-looking knothole.

“Oh! I say, El—Teddy, I mean, le’s res’ f’om ’spons’bility in dat big ches’nut.” So saying, he lazily climbed the tree.

“Where are you going?” called the Little Bear.

“To sleep,” answered the ’Possum as he disappeared high up in a knothole. The Bear was sorry that he could not go with his friend into the higher place. And he had to be content to take his rest in the hollow trunk of the same tree, only he entered at the ground opening. As he made himself comfortable below, he called aloft:

“Good night this morning until tonight, Brother ’Possum.”

“Night,” sleepily came the answer.

Teddy had just gotten nicely started in a first-rate dream in which he himself was transformed into a giant Ji-as-ti-cu-tus (no, we do not recognize that animal, Teddy dreamed it), heading straight for Bruintown. As he approached, his

old tormentor bears gave a scream of terror. This scream awakened Teddy, but it really came from Old Mr. 'Possum, who had in his sleep unfortunately tumbled off his insecure bed right spang into a colony of wild bees who dwelt four feet below him.

“Ouch! Help! Help! Jawbone Sampson! Burglars! Bargain sales! Buzz-saws!” yelled the distracted 'Possum as he scrambled out and down the tree to the ground. He was being followed by about two baker's dozens of the avenging bees.

Teddy bounded out and courageously joined Brother 'Possum in his battle against the bees, but it was a victorious fight for the bees, for they stung the Old 'Possum's sharp nose seven times and he also got stung on each paw. Poor Teddy got his share too. His casualties were four stings on his tender nose and a sting on each paw. Old Brother 'Possum tumbled over and tried his well-known trick of playing dead, but this didn't

work, for he got two extra stings on his smooth tail which caused him to quickly revive and follow the Little Bear, who had already fled through the rhododendron bushes.

They ran down a steep bank to a brook and dived into a deep place and swam to the mud shore lower down. The bees had by that time left them. Both had swollen noses and the 'Possum had two sizable lumps on his tail. He was softly crying and the Little Bear was having a good loud cry. After his cry had slowed down enough for him to speak, he asked:

“Do you always go to sleep in that kind of a place, Mr. 'Pos?”

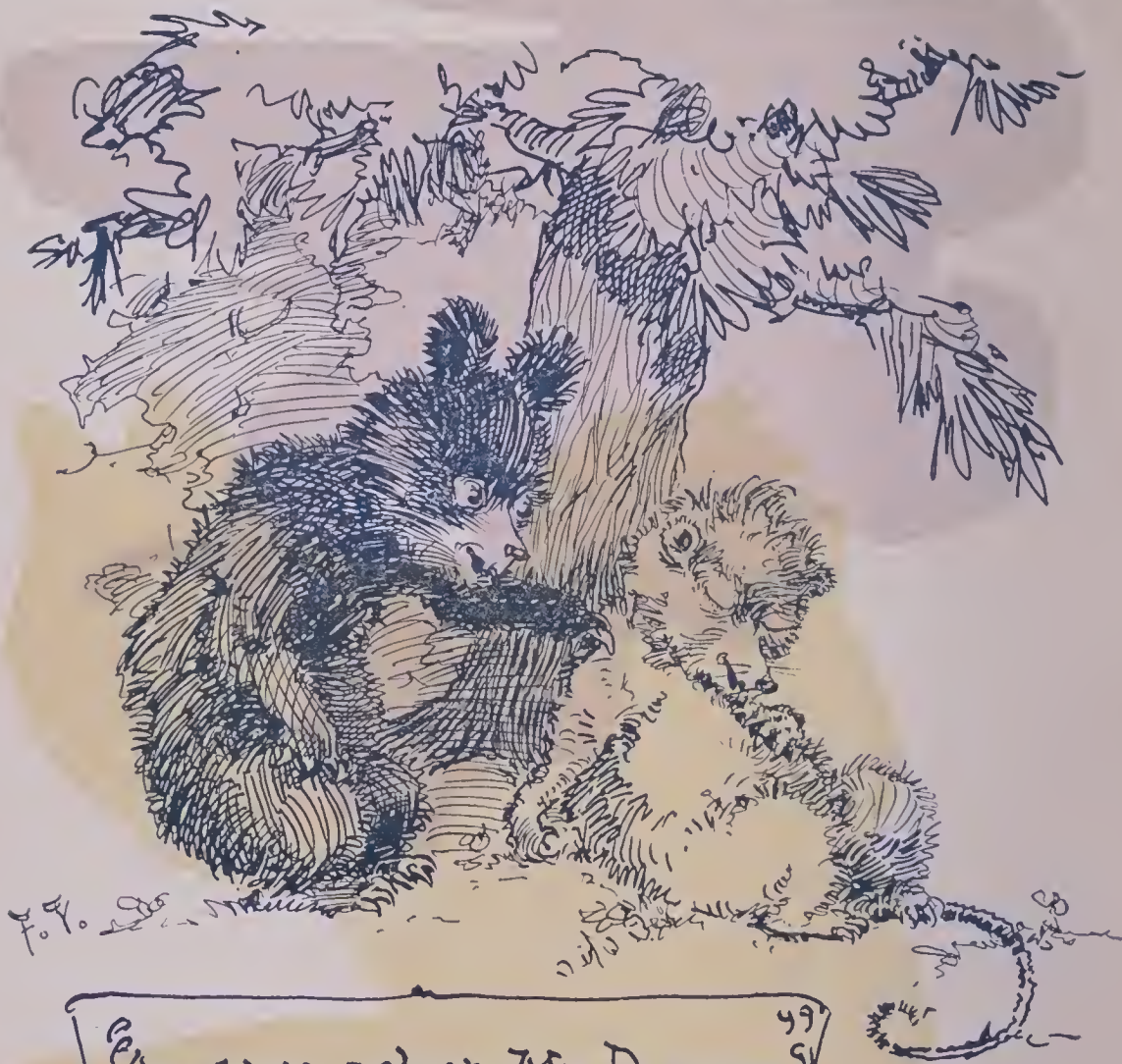
The 'Possum pretended not to hear but rather thickly said:

“'F yo' dry up and shet yo' mouth, Elmer, I'll use m' Aunt Mary's cure fo' bee bite.”

He first daubed his own nose with soft mud and then built two mud balls around the lumps on his tail. Afterwards he daubed Teddy's nose

until it looked like an unbaked brick and he was not gentle about it either. He also gave the bear a lump of mud to hold to ease his paws, and held another in his own paws.

Then they both sat down and neither said a word for a long time.



49
Are you asleep Mr. Possum?

IV

AFTER the mud on Teddy's and Mr. 'Possum's noses had dried so that it would crack off, and the bee-stings were pretty well cured, and the Little Bear had washed his face, he happened to think that he had entirely forgotten the fact that he had really started out to visit his Grandma. It had been Teddy's intention, when he first met the 'Possum, to enquire if he knew where the Old Lady Bear lived. But, in the excitement of all that happened, the subject had completely slipped his mind.

“By the way, Brother 'Possum,” said the Little Bear, “do you, by any chance, happen to know where my old Grandma lives?”

“Aw, stop yo' kiddin', El—I mean Teddy,” said the 'Possum, “I don' ever done know yo' had a Grannysnapper.”

“Yes, indeed, I have,” corrected Teddy, “a real nice Old Bear Granny, and I’m going to find her. Won’t you please help me, Mr. ’Possum?”

“Now, jes’ hol’ yo’ hoss’s, Mista Li’l Bear; ’scuse me, I don’t cal’late to ambulate into de hungry jaws o’ any o’ yo’ kinfolks, not ’fi knows m’ min’,” said the cautious ’Possum.

“Hold your own horses! Not so fast, Mr. ’Possum. My Grandma would never hurt a pal of mine; besides, she’d be glad to see you. Now, please tell me, *do you know where she lives?*”

“I s’pos’ mo’n likely I does know,” said the ’Possum, “fo’ I gen’rly c’n lokate whar ev’y las’ one o’ de tribe o’ bears lib what make dar habitation in dese parts o’ dis hem’sp’ere. Mayhap yo’d condescend to provide a perscription (description) o’ yo’ Grannysnapper. Proceed, Mista Bear.”

“Well,” said Teddy, “my dear old Grandma is a fine big good-natured bear as ever lived. She

was nineteen years old on the twenty-third of last November, and she does not look more than half her age. She was, on her mother's side, a Smith-Murphy. All the Smith-Murphy bears were very proud and well-behaved. My Grandma was the pet of the fam— Are you listening, Brother 'Possum?"

"Um-huh," grunted the 'Possum, "proceed wid de rat-kill'n'."

"Grandma's name," continued the Little Bear, "is Lucy or Lucinda Milarky. She got her Milarky name from a wild harum-scarum bear by the name of Dan Milarky (he was my granddad), who courted her when she was only four years old. She eloped with the rascal much against the Smith-Mur— Look at me, 'Possum! Are you asleep?"

"Me? Yo' speakin' to me, Elmer?" sleepily answered the Old 'Possum. "No, indeed, I's wide-awake. M' min's recordin' all de wickedness o' dem lo' down tribe yo's complainin'

'bout. Yo' sho does hab m' symp'thy, Mista Teddy."

Mr. 'Possum's sleepy rumbling was too much for the Little Bear's pride and he felt his hasty temper rising so fast that he knew he would surely do something to the 'Possum if he did not check himself. So he walked off and sat down and slowly counted eleven in a whisper, but he found his temper was not improving much, so he counted six more out loud. This helped some and he felt, after a few minutes, that he could trust himself to speak calmly to Brother 'Possum.

As he approached his unworthy friend he heard steady see-saw snores and knew Mr. 'Possum's spirit was safe somewhere in the backwoods of Dreamland. So Teddy rested awhile until he felt the grip of hunger. The more he thought about that bee-tree, the hungrier he grew. Finally, he decided to wake the Old 'Possum. This he did by splashing water on him.

Brother 'Possum shook himself and rubbed his sleepy eyes and asked Teddy if there was anything he could do for him.

“Yes, come along,” urged the Little Bear, “and let’s go back to that bee-tree and get some of the good honey.”

“A Jack-whoopin’ noble tho’t,” ejaculated the 'Possum, “but first we’ll mud-daub our smellers an’ git de start o’ de tarnation bees.”

This they wisely did and carried some mud-balls besides, knowing they would be useful.

Brother 'Possum climbed up inside the tree and soon loosened several well-filled honey-combs and dropped them down for Teddy to catch. When a goodly quantity had been procured, they carried it off a short distance and then both greedily gorged themselves. But the bees were not going to allow their honey to be taken without a protest and some of them followed. Then more and more bees came until the bee-robbers again had to fight. They put up a

poor fight, and, being too full to run and much smeared with honey besides, they both lay down and rolled in the dry leaves. Of course, the leaves stuck fast. They kept on rolling in the leaves until they were a sight to behold, and you could hardly tell which was the 'Possum and which was the Little Bear.



"She must have thought
it was only a bad dream"

V

“IT was all your fault,” said Teddy, after the bees had given up their pursuit. “You might have known that mud-daubin’ could not save us from the mad bees. I’m a sight, just look at me, will you?”

“Yes, I sees yo’ or, at leas’ somepin’ what looks like a live trash-pile,” answered the ’Possum. “Now, Mista Bear, ’f yo’ sho yo’ lookin’ dis way—fo’ I can’t tell by yo’ looks—so’s yo’ can hear de remarks dat’s a-comin’ outen m’ min’.

“Yo’ yo’self am to blame,” declared the Old ’Possum, “’f yo’ hadn’t been so tarnation good-fo’-nothin’ lazy yo’d a carried de honey fur nuf away outen sight an’ hearin’ o’ dem stingy bees, ’stead o’ wastin’ it; me an’ yo’ would now be

peaceful' enjoyin' de feas' 'stead o' standin' here like twin hay-cocks pickin' a fuss."

Mr. 'Possum sat down and wheezed very hard after so freely speaking his mind.

The Little Bear did not altogether look at the incident in the same light as did the 'Possum. Still, he hated a fuss; he had had so many of them in Bruintown, so he cautiously remarked:

"I'm afraid, Brother 'Possum, that if I go to see my old Granny looking like I do now she'll hardly know me."

"I s'posen yo' old Grannysnapper take yo' fo' a bugbear, Mista Teddy!"

"Well, anyhow, Brother 'Pos, can't you do something to help me get rid of this disagreeable disguise?" pleaded the Little Bear.

"Le'me think," said Old Mr. 'Possum, "'f I pic' yo' leaves off, da'll stic' fas' to m' own sticky paws."

"Please do it," pleaded Teddy.

"All right, El— Teddy, I mean, 'f yo' 'gree to

pic' my leaves off'n me after I done pic' yo'."

But the Little Bear answered "No" by vigorously shaking his leafy head.

"I 'clare to goodness, Mista B'ar, I jes' now think how we kin git shed o' dese blas'd leaves. I got a fren', a owl, name o' Miss Hoo's Hoo-o-o. She make a specialty o' pickin' chickens. Come 'long, le's fin' 'er an' gib 'er de job o' Fillydefy dry-pickin' us."

It was almost dark by the time Teddy and Brother 'Possum reached the old dead tree on the mountain side where Miss Hoo's Hoo-o-o lived. The Owl was still fast asleep. First, the 'Possum made a noise like an owl, but the sleepy old bird never moved. Then he said:

"Cut! cut! Ca-dad-cut! Get yo' hair cut!"

Instantly the Old Owl awoke and flew down to where the 'Possum and Bear stood waiting. But she must have thought they were two ghosts or that it had been a bad dream that had disturbed her rest, for she hurriedly flew to a dis-

tant tree and called back "Hoo's hooo ho-o-o?"

But neither of them thought it worth while to answer.

"'Clare to goodness," said Mr. 'Possum, "I's s'prised an' shocked at de bad manners o' some o' m' fren's. Anyhow," he continued, "I has some other fren's what am obligated to me fo' pas' favors—fac' is—but don' yo' tell anybody—dey still owe me fo' two doz'n las' year's roas'nears (green corn). I knows very well da not fail me, leas'wise da neber hab gi'me de slip when I suffer in tribulation. De name o' dese folks am Mr. an' Mrs. Molly an' Mike Muskrat an' fam'ly. Now, washin' do be a specialty wid dem folks. So come 'long, Elmer (the 'Possum forgot Teddy again), le's gi'm de job o' scourin' dis sticky mess offen us."

By that time the poor Little Bear was too tired and discouraged to offer any objection. So off they both went in search of the Muskrat family. As they stumbled along through the dark

shadows of the moonlit woods, their leaves rustled like the gathering of a wind-storm.

When they arrived the Muskrats were all busy. Molly Muskrat and her children were cleaning house and carrying out trash and a lot of last year's old corncobs. Mike Muskrat was laboriously bringing in a big armful of green clover and new corn sprouts, but when they saw our two sad heroes approaching, they all quickly dived into the pool and swam under water to their den opening beneath the surface and disappeared.

Teddy and Old Brother 'Possum lay that night on the bank by the pool and slept just as they were.

VI

TEDDY and Mr. 'Possum were awakened at early dāwn by that mysterious gentle wind that always precedes the rising sun and heralds the coming day. Both lay still for some minutes listening. By and by they were startled by the noise of a cracking dead twig. Pretty soon they saw the gray form of Old Mr. 'Coon come ambling along the other side of the pool. He was intent on catching a few crawfish before laying up for the day after his night wanderings. He turned over some stones and appeared to have pretty good luck until he came opposite where Teddy and Brother 'Possum sat. When he happened to catch sight of them he was struck dumb for a brief spell. Then he gave a cry which sounded like this:

“Ou-yiz-wor-r-r-r-z-z-z!!” and dropping his crawfish he started to run.

“Jack-whoopin’! Halt! Tadpoles, young ducks, quack! quack!” loudly screamed the ’Possum.

This cry brought the ’Coon to a standstill.

“Why yo’ makin’ tracks leadin’ away so fas’, Brother ’Coon? Please come back an’ hear some remarks o’ me an’ m’ fren’ who am in tribulation.”

“Yes, please do come and help us to get free from this hateful sticky mess, that’s a good ’Coon,” pleaded the Little Bear.

The ’Coon was about to take to his heels again when he heard the leaf-covered Bear speak, but he stopped when Mr. ’Possum said:

“Don’ yo’ know yo’ ol’ Jack-whoopin’ pal? Yo’ always a good han’ at huskin’ corn. Come ’long an’ husk us outen dese dod-blas’d leaves.”

“Wal, by gum! Katydids and crickets! I’m t-totally double-jiggered,” said the Old ’Coon, “if ’tain’t Ol’ Jo ’Pos and Little Elmer lookin’ like two young bales o’ hay.”

So much noise outside the Muskrat's home roused their curiosity and Old Mike cautiously slid down from their underground cavern into the tunnel leading to the below-water door and soon stuck his round head above the surface of the pool. He first saw Mr. 'Coon, which gave him courage to come all the way out of the water. He was about to say something when he spied the two leafy objects he had seen the night before. The Old Muskrat lost no time in dodging behind the 'Coon.

“ 'Lo, Mike!” called Brother 'Possum, “ 'f yo' hasn't got no spite 'gin yo' ol' fren', why don' yo' howdy me?”

But the Muskrat never moved or said a word until his old friend spoke again.

“ 'Clare to goodness, Mike, yo' sho done los' yo' min', er else yo' manners am gone a-fishin'.”

At length the sound of Mr. 'Possum's familiar voice caused the Muskrat to recognize his old friend, for Mike came forward with a grin and

rather sheepishly, or muskrately, shook paws with the 'Possum, who then introduced him to Teddy.

The Muskrat bowed politely enough but he was either too stupid or too mystified to speak. The 'Coon also acted as though the cat had *his* tongue, for he had nothing more to say.

Then Brother 'Possum explained at great length to his astonished friends all about the unfortunate mishap and offered both himself and Teddy as clinching evidence.

“Now, m' kin' fren's,” continued the 'Possum after clearing his throat, “we both come to yo' in dis sor'ful tribulation an' spec' yo'-all am goin' to pitch in an' he'p us outen dis sticky mess.”

“Yes, oh please do help us,” interrupted the Little Bear, “you've no idea how ugly we feel.”

“We very well knows,” again spoke the 'Possum, “dat yo', Brother 'Coon, done make washin' an' cleanin' yo' business an'—why, ev'ry one

knows de Muskrats done scrub an' clean to beat de ban'. Now Mike," said he, nodding to the Muskrat, "go home an' tell yo' ol' missus an' de chilluns to hurry up an' jine yo' an' Mista 'Coon in de ceremony o' cleanin' an' scrapin' an' scourin' yo' fren's what need it mighty bad."

Old Mike hurriedly went off to do as he was bid, and Mr. 'Coon undressed and got ready for the business at hand.

"I knows," said the 'Possum, when the Muskrat family had assembled and all was ready, "dis is a dis'greeable job, but it am goin' to be wusser—much wusser fo' me an' El—Teddy, an' 'fi carry on an' scol' an' fight, as I's likely to do, never min', but keep right on wid de cleanin'. After I done git washed, mebbe I pitch in an' he'p clean up Teddy."

When the Little Bear heard all this, he could hardly help wishing that he was back in Bruin-town, and he did wish that he was safe in his old Granny's arms.



"Teddy again broke into a loud cry"

VII

WHEN the "ceremony," as the Old 'Possum called it, was about to begin, of removing the sticky mess of honey and leaves from the Little Bear and Mr. 'Possum, the poor old boy's heart failed him and he slumped down and fainted dead away. But he did not fool either the Muskrat family, who were all eager to begin and enjoy the fun, nor did it mislead Mr. 'Coon who showed a sly twinkle in his eye.

So they carried the apparently lifeless limp bundle of 'Possum to the edge of the pool and tossed him in. He sank like a stone, but the Old 'Coon and all the Muskrat family jumped in after him. Mike and Molly Muskrat soon brought the 'Possum to the surface. The cold plunge had revived him and he was spitting furiously and gasping for breath. As soon as

the half strangled 'Possum was able to speak, he begged to be let go.

“Le'me be,” he yelled, “I rudder wear dese leaves de res' o' m' life dan perish mis'bly like a drown' rat! Le'go! I tells yo'! I got somepin' to live fo' now, jes' to get even wid yo' cowards an' bullies. So he'p me Jon—”

But his cry for Old Jonah's help was lost, for two of the junior Muskrats pulled him under by the tail and began sousing him up and down like a churn-dasher, while Mr. 'Coon thoughtfully held the 'Possum's mouth shut with both paws to keep him from swallowing too much water, also to shut off his threats and complaints.

By that time poor Teddy was so frightened at seeing the 'Possum's rough treatment that he began screaming at the top of his voice and started to run away.

Old Mr. 'Coon fortunately saw this attempted escape, so he left the Muskrat family to finish the job for Brother 'Possum and soon overhauled

the Little Bear in his mad dash for freedom.

Poor Teddy begged piteously to be excused from the sousing he knew was awaiting him, but the merciless 'Coon only held fast and slowly marched him back. He told the Little Bear a good scrubbing would really be the making of him, and that that was a part of the program he himself had agreed to. "Besides," said the 'Coon, "it is a lot of fun and by Hicky! I wouldn't miss the circus myself for anything."

They found on their return that the Muskrat family were succeeding beautifully. Although Brother 'Possum had fainted again, Old Mike was kindly holding his head above the water, while Molly and the youngsters were industriously washing the very last of the leaves and all the honey from his furry hide. Then they gently carried the limp form of the make-believe dead 'Possum and laid him on the grass to dry. All stood around with their arms akimbo, while the poor little leaf-bedecked Bear sat for a while,

sobbing beside the peaceful but clean 'Possum.

Teddy broke into a loud wail when they grabbed and marched him towards the pool. He gave an extra loud cry as they tossed him in, while all the washers gave a shout of glee as they dived in after him.

This noise revived Mr. 'Possum marvelously, for he jumped up and laughed and cheered with all his might.

“Go it Brother 'Coon! Go it Mike Muskrat! Scrub 'im hard Miss Molly! Neber min' Elmer's complain's (in the excitement he got the Little Bear's name wrong again), clean 'im up clean so's he Grannysnapper 'll know 'im when de ol' gal see 'im a-comin'.” Encouraged by Mr. 'Possum's enthusiasm, the washers *were* doing the job thoroughly.

Teddy very wisely soon stopped fighting. In fact he was rather pleased at the result as he stood in the edge of the pool and had a last rinse-down.

When they were all assembled again on the bank and the Little Bear had shaken himself like a wet dog, Old Brother 'Possum formally thanked Mike and Molly Muskrat and complimented the junior members of their family. He heartily shook paws with Mr. 'Coon and was preparing a set speech of gratitude in his mind for all collectively when he happened to glance over his shoulder.

What he saw caused him to apparently drop dead again. Old Mr. 'Coon and the Muskrat family were also terror-stricken, for they one and all instantly dived into the pool. But Teddy stood perfectly still as a full-grown bear approached.



"You must have frightened him to death"
said the Little Bear

VIII

IT was Old Bear Peter, the Constable of Bruintown, who had come in search of the stray Little Bear.

Poor Teddy's heart sank when Old Peter walked up and stood before him. Teddy met the stern gaze of the accusing eye fixed upon him with an appealing look. Then he said:

“Go ahead, Mr. Constable, and say it. I'm waiting to hear you say—as you always do—that you are very sorry, but you must do your duty and take me back to Bruintown.”

“Yes,” said the old custodian of the law good-naturedly, “that's about what I was going to remark. I might also ask have you got anything to say for yourself, Elmer?”

“Not very much,” answered the Little Bear, “for you really must know why I ran away from

Bruintown. And if you take me back," he threatened, "I'll run away again the very first chance I get and go to live with my dear Old Grandma, that is, if I can find her. There's one more thing, Mr. Constable, I have to say for myself, which is, that my name is now Teddy. When I ran away I left my Elmer name behind because I did not like it any more."

"Well," said Old Peter, "I can't say that I blame you so very much for clearin' out of Bruintown. Still, as you know, I must take you back there, but not right away, for I want to take my time and look around these parts and enjoy myself before we do go back. By the way," he continued, "who killed that 'Possum?" He winked at Teddy as he said this, and picked Brother 'Possum up by the tail.

"I fear you must have frightened him to death," said the Little Bear.

"Well, anyhow," said Old Peter, "I'm not very hungry at present, but let's take this nice

fat 'Possum with us and look around a bit." So off they started, Old Constable Peter leading Teddy on one side, and carrying poor Mr. 'Possum by the tail upside down on the other.*

But they had not gone very far until the 'Possum grew tired of "playing 'possum" and said, "'Scuse me, Mista Bear, but I'se had 'bout all de tail-stretchin' I cares fo'. Please le'go my tail!"

Mr. Bear instantly dropped him and pretended great surprise at finding the 'Possum was still alive. He then explained to the embarrassed 'Possum that he had thought some of eating him for dinner. "But now," said Old Peter, "that you are alive I'm going to let you decide whether you will be my dinner or be my servant."

"Your servant!! at yo' servace, sir," cried

**Author's note.*—All hunters know, and all colored people know, but not quite all readers know, that Brother 'Possum has often been carried a long distance like Old Peter was carrying him without showing the least sign of life until he was put down, then he would jump up and quickly make good his escape.

Brother 'Possum, almost before the words were out of the Bear's mouth. You see, he was afraid Mr. Bear might change his mind. He then dropped to his knees and thanked his new master for kindly saving his life.

This touching ceremony was too much for Teddy, so he turned his face the other way. The 'Possum thought the Little Bear was softly crying, but the Constable knew better. He knew he was only laughing.

Old Peter then explained to Brother 'Possum what services would be expected of him, which would be chiefly the business of hustling around and finding provisions for all three, and that Teddy would help him. "I, too," said he, although he was notoriously lazy, "will occasionally lend a helping hand or paw."

"Now I trust," sternly cautioned Old Peter, "that you will not allow yourself to grow slack in your duties, for I solemnly warn you, if you do, you will no longer be my servant, but will

be my——” Just then a noise interrupted him, and Mr. 'Possum was glad of it, for he did not care to hear any more.

They all listened.

“It sounds to me,” said the Little Bear, “as though there might be something going on back at the pool where we came from.”

“Well, Elm— Teddy, I should say, you and 'Pos may run back and find out what it is, while I rest here and have a smoke.”

Teddy and the 'Possum hurried off and were well out of sight when the Old 'Possum said:

“Do yo' s'pose, Elmer, yo' gwine to fin' yo' ol' Grannysnapper in swimmin'?”

But Teddy did not answer for he knew the question had only been asked to spite him. Another reason he did not answer was because the 'Possum had called him “Elmer.”



The 'Possum was sorry he had ever called the Little Bear "Elmer"

IX

TEDDY and Old Brother 'Possum very quietly made their way through the thick undergrowth in the deep woods, and, as they drew near the pool, loud shouts of laughter and much splashing of water could be heard.

Pretty soon they were able to see from behind the protection of leaf screen, four small boys, who were in swimming. Not far from where the Little Bear and 'Possum stood lay four piles of scattered clothes which had been hastily shed by the small lads in the water.

As our heroes looked at those scattered garments, the same thought seemed to occur to both "peeping Toms" at the same instant.

So without saying a word each began sorting and trying on what he thought suited him best. Very quietly they dressed without interrupting the sport at the pool.

“De li’l chil’n am enj’yin’ darselves a lot more’n we did dis mawnin, eh, Teddy?” whispered the ’Possum; then as an after-thought, he added, “I’ll bet a sweet ’tater ’gin a persimmon dat two o’ dem li’l fellers gwine to wear da’ Sunday togs termorrer.”

After the Little Bear and the ’Possum were all dressed, they were both so pleased and anxious to see just how they looked that they cut across and came upon another pool around the bend in the stream below. There they surprised the same Mike and Molly Muskrat family who had abandoned the other pool on account of the noisy swimmers. But when they saw our dressed-up heroes, they all quickly dived and sought safety in another under-bank cavern, because they thought two of the small boys had dressed and were following them.

After the disturbed waters had become quiet again, both Teddy and Brother ’Possum climbed out on a projecting log over the pool. There

they gazed long and admiringly at their reflected images in the glassy water.

Teddy held his head first on one side then on the other. He removed his hat and bowed and smiled at himself. Meanwhile, Old Brother 'Possum was having a grand time. He pulled his cap well down over his sharp eyes and tried to look saucy. Then he placed it carelessly over his right ear, then over the left ear. Afterwards he assumed his well-known play-dead-'possum look and peeped at his reflection with one half-open eye. This seemed so funny that he laughed at himself. Then he laughed at himself laughing at himself. This tickled the little fellow half to death; he laughed until he was weak, and bent so far back that he lost his balance and tumbled into the deep water.

“Oum!! O O O O O O O O!” said he, as he sank. (Those scattered O's are only bubbles that came up where his drowned laugh went down.)

But Brother 'Possum soon came up again and Teddy, with great presence of mind, reached down from his log perch and caught him by the collar of his jacket and hauled the sober, soaked 'Possum back to safety on the log.

This act of heroism so pleased the half-drowned 'Possum, that he was sorry he had so often called the Little Bear, "Elmer," and so tauntingly alluded to his Grandma as "Granny-snapper."

Old Mr. 'Possum quickly undressed and hung his clothes on a hickory limb to dry. No! Teddy did not laugh, but he felt so much like doing so that he could not trust himself to speak.

"Le's ketch a nice mess o' mussels an' fresh water clams," said the 'Possum, "whilse de garments am a-dryin' an' carry 'em back to de new master."

The Little Bear readily agreed and pitched in to help. By the time they had as many as they

thought they could carry, Brother 'Possum's clothes were dry again, so he lost no time in getting back into them.

“Now den,” said he, “le’s cram, jam an’ stuff all de pockets chuck full o’ dese clams an’ mus-sels an’ s’prise de President-King-Constable-Bear.”

They did surprise the Old Bear, who at first pretended he did not know them. But when they began emptying their bulging pockets, he dropped his pretense and a broad grin overspread his jolly face.

The lazy old Bruintown Constable Bear thanked them both and warmly complimented Teddy on his improved appearance. He also praised his faithful servant, the 'Possum, on the fit of his new uniform.



“Yo see I’s not much to look at,
but I suttinly am chuck full
o’ awful good learnin’”

X

OLD BEAR PETER, the Constable of Bruintown, was quite content with the way Teddy and his faithful servant, the 'Possum, waited on him. They seemed to know just what to do to keep the old fellow comfortable and happy.

True, they both worked hard at hunting about and carrying things in to eat. The Old Bear had selected a very comfortable cave for their home. Peter had a prodigious appetite. Teddy wasn't far behind and the 'Possum—well, he ate like a cook often does, and nibbled a lot besides, and nearly always complained of not being hungry.

There was generally such an abundance that the Old Bear hardly ever threatened to eat his servant, the 'Possum. Once when Peter did threaten to eat him, poor Brother 'Possum fainted dead away in his tracks. But the silly

Bear was only fooling and told the poor 'Possum so as soon as he came to again.

The 'Possum was really a wonderful provider; he was never at a loss to know where to go after supplies.

"I often wonder," said Teddy one day, "how under the sun you come to know so much," and came very near saying, "when you look so stupid," but he checked himself just in time.

"Le's res' a minute an' hol' converse" (talk), said Brother 'Possum, as he put down an armful of early sweet apples and a nice strip of smoked bacon.

"Yo' see," he began, "I's really not much to look at, but I wants to tell yo' I's crammed full o' awful good learnin'. I spec', Mista Teddy, dat I knows more'n what de smart'st one o' m' neighbors do, an' I oft'n ca'c'late more'n de whole passel bunched togeder."

The Little Bear nodded encouragingly, which induced the boasting 'Possum to keep on talking.

“How come I knows so much, yo’ inquisitate (asked) while ago? Well sah! I al’ys listen to de naborhood gossip. But I neber tells tales m’self. “Now dere’s Ol’ Grinnie, de ’Coon, ’f’e strike luck an’ fin’ a chicken roos’, a hen’s nes’, a patch o’ green corn or anything fit to eat, he come straight t’ me an’ boas’ ’bout it, al’ys mentionin’ de spot he fin’ it. Consecordin’ly (as a consequence) Mista ’Coon’s provision market done become Ol’ Brer ’Possum’s provision market.

“Den, take Charlie Chat’rbox, de Squirrel. He de wors’ tattletale in de woods, o’ course, ’ceptin’ Jim Crow—’fi fo’git to tell o’ Jim, by un by please remin’ me, fo’ he do be special.”

“Why, I always thought the Squirrel was harmless,” said Teddy.

“*Shu* he is! harmless an’ useful,” declared the ’Possum. “Charlie rise early an’ work de whole blessed day till sundown, findin’ out whar

grub mos' abundant. More'n dat he know de feedin' place o' all de res' o' de woods-folks, an' he not back'rd o' comin' for'd t' he'p heself, 'til he mos' bust. Den he fill his cheeky face so full dat he can't swaller. After'ds he 'bligingly come an' brag 'bout whar he git de good things, an' I listen. Consecordingly, he provision market done become Mr. 'Possum's provision market, an' all he fren's' an' enemies' provision markets done become de same 'Possum's provision market."

"That may account for your being so fat," said the Little Bear, "you have so many handy markets."

"Yes sah, Elmer! I is a trifle fat," quickly answered the 'Possum, "an' I have yo' know I's not ashame' o' it either."

"Now don't get peeved," said Teddy, "I only meant to compliment you. Go on and tell me about Jim Crow before you forget."

"Jes' yo' keep still chile! an' don' interrupt,"

said the 'Possum, "whiles I tell yo' 'bout Ol' Jim Crow."

"Well, to do Jim justice, he not so black as he done be painted, but all de world knows Jim steal, an' why shouldn't he? For he so everlastin' hungry; he borned so, I spec, an' he argify dat de big world done owe him a livin'. But on 'count o' poor management, he miss gittin' it. He git only 'bout half o' it. Jim's curiosity keep him down, even if he do fly high, an' he gene'ly tell more'n he knows, dat is when he's awake. But he often talk truth in he sleep. An' right dare, Mista Teddy, is whar I profits, for I listen; de soun' o' Jim's loud dreamin' carry down de tree lim's into de holler tree whar I 'bide (where I live). I hear Jim tell de truth 'bout de market places o' all de res' o' de woods critters. Consecordingly de big gen'l market o' all de woods-folks done become de big gen'l market o' Mista 'Possum, fo' which I be much 'bliged to Ol' Jim Crow, who am suttingly as queer as de seben

geese what done roos' on de seben gables."

"Oh, I'm *so* hungry," interrupted the Little Bear.

"So'm I," echoed the Old 'Possum. "Le's hurry back, fo' de Ol' President-King-Constable Bear mus' also be mos' famish'."



What
Jim Crow
saw

XI

ONE evening, after they had all eaten a hearty supper and Old Bear Peter had finished smoking his first pipe, Teddy thought it a good time to ask Mr. Bear if he could tell him where his Grandma lived. The old fellow made no reply at first, but ordered the 'Possum to bring the flint and dry punk and light another pipe for him.

After the pipe was lit and the 'Possum had carried out the scraps left from supper and given them to Jim Crow, who had as usual been anxiously waiting for them, Peter puffed away for a minute, then turned to Teddy and said:

“What was it, Sonny, you asked me while ago? Oh, yes, I do remember, yo' want to know where your Gran'mam lives. What might her name be?”

The Little Bear shifted his position, and after clearing his throat said:

“My Grandma, on her mother’s side was a—”

Just then he was interrupted by Brother ’Possum who hurriedly entered and said:

“ ’Scuse me, sah! But Jim Crow he do say he done see a li’l black picaninny totin’ a watermelon ’cross de crick ’bout de size o’ a haystack.”

The Old Constable of Bruintown dropped his pipe and nearly ran over Teddy in his hurry to capture that watermelon.

“Come along, Teddy,” said he, “and you, ’Pos, get a move on, and chase up to the forks and make sure the melon don’t escape in that direction, and we’ll grab the thief at the bend of the creek by the big sycamore tree if he comes that way.”

Mr. ’Possum cut across in the direction his master had directed him to go. Jim Crow, too, joined in the chase, and left his half-finished supper of scraps and flew on ahead. Pretty soon

he spied the little picaninny again. He had stopped to rest before starting to climb the path that led up the hill to his home. Jim flew back and told Brother 'Possum where to look for the prize, and then excused himself as it was already late and he wanted to finish his supper before bedtime.

Mr. 'Possum made his way through the thick undergrowth of dogwood and laurel bushes until he came to a pawpaw thicket which he passed through to the lower side; from there he could plainly see the little negro who sat resting. He had that pleased look on his black face that only the prospect of a watermelon feast can produce. "I sho'ly hates to disturb dat black chile," thought the watchful 'Possum, "he look so glory-hale'uya' happy."

But the little colored boy's "glory-hallelujah" expression did not last long, for he picked up the huge melon and staggered off. He had gone but a short distance when he nearly bumped into

the Old Bear and Teddy who stood right before him in the path.

“Halt! Who comes there?” said Old Constable Peter.

At the sight of the big and little bears the poor little negro’s face turned the color of dead ashes, his legs weakened, causing him to drop in his tracks, and the watermelon rolled down the path where Mr. ’Possum, who was hurriedly coming in that direction, tried to stop it. But it was by then going so fast that it passed right over the poor Old ’Possum.

The shock was so great that he, too, dropped in his tracks and gave way to his usual ’possum faint.

The little negro, however, quickly recovered, jumped to his feet and ran like a deer.

The sight of Brother ’Possum being bowled over caused Teddy to have a case of giggle-laughs, while fat Old Peter shook with chuckles as he saw the little colored boy disappear in one

direction and the watermelon whirl off in the other and catch the eager 'Possum in its flight.

“I haven't had so much fun,” said he, as he slapped his knee, “since the day an artist was brought into Bruintown.”

After Teddy had tried in vain to rouse the 'Possum, Old Peter picked him up by the tail and carried him to where the wrecked melon lay; then he dropped him.

Both Teddy and the Old Bear lost no time in helping themselves to large chunks of the delicious melon. Pretty soon Brother 'Possum revived and pitched in without saying a word and ate his full share. They all ate until they were full. Then they walked around for a while and came back and ate what was left.

When they started home, Teddy and the 'Possum were so full that Old Peter had to carry them both all the way back up the steep hill to their cave, but all three were happy as stuffed toads.



“Where on earth did you get
it Poss!”

XII

BOTH Teddy and Brother 'Possum felt very uneasy because of Old Bear Peter's manner toward them for several days after the watermelon feast.

They had nearly worn themselves out fetching supplies for his every want, and still he was not happy but cross as a wolverine.

"I'm afraid the old boy is homesick," said Teddy, "and that he will take a notion one of these days to go back to Bruintown and try to take me with him." (Notice Teddy said "try," which shows—well it shows the Little Bear did not intend to go if he could possibly help it.)

After Brother 'Possum had thought a minute, he said:

"Have it done entered yo' min' dat de Ol' Bear am meat hungry?"

Teddy made no reply, but he did notice the pained look which came over the 'Possum's usual jolly face.

"I done notice," continued Mr. 'Possum, "dat de Constable look at me mighty cu'ious outen de corner o' his eye an' show his teeth. Yo' know he did say what he gwine to do to me once."

"No! no! You must not think that," said Teddy as he soothingly laid his paw on the distressed 'Possum's shoulder. "I know very well Old Peter would never think of such a thing. I'm sure he loves you."

"Well, I only hope he love me in he heart an' not in he umbilicus" (stomach), sadly said the 'Possum.

"Maybe the reason Mr. Bear is so queer is because his tobacco is all gone and the old fellow has had nothing to smoke for the last three days but dried mullen leaves," said Teddy.

"Well, if dat's de cause o' he worry," hastily said the 'Possum, "I c'n mighty soon fetch de

remedy.” And away he went as fast as his short legs could take him.

In about forty-five minutes Mr. 'Possum returned, very much out of breath, carrying a small package. Teddy gave him a big drink of water and asked where he had been. But the 'Possum only gave him a mysterious look, which meant that his business was of great importance, then he rushed into the cave where Old Peter sat smoking dried mullen leaves. The cave was so filled with ill-smelling smoke that it caused the 'Possum to cough and sneeze something dreadful. As soon as he was able to straighten up, and without saying a word, he handed the Old Bear a half-pound package of “Dilly's Powhattan Delight” smoking tobacco.

The effect was like magic, for a pleased smile overspread Mr. Bear's face and his paws trembled so he could hardly load his pipe. Mr. 'Possum obligingly helped him with flint and punk to get it going.

After a half-dozen puffs the Old Constable took his faithful servant on his knee, and after thanking him and giving him a real bear hug, not too hard, he said:

“ ’Pos, you are a wonder! Now tell me where in ‘Sam Hill’ did you get it? Why, I thought there was none of this priceless brand of ’backy this side of Bruintown.”

“Well, sah! Mr. President Constable, I done locate it in de Jack-Pot cabin what am on de sho’ o’ Black Duck Lake; whar de sport-nuts shoot ducks in de fall o’ de year. An’ I dunno whar dey obtain da terbacker any more’n dey know howcome yo’ am smokin’ it dis minute, sah!”

Both Old Peter and Teddy were anxious to know more about the Jack-Pot cabin and begged Brother ’Possum to tell all about it.

Mr. ’Possum felt very proud of being asked to speak and give important information, so he climbed on a rock ledge and faced his listeners.

He bowed very politely and after clearing his throat began:

“Well, sah! Ladies an’ Gent’men—I mean kin’ frien’s—”

“Au! Cut it out. We want to know about that cabin,” interrupted Teddy.

“Yo’ min’ yo’ own business, Elmer, an’ don’ interrupt de speaker,” said the ’Possum with a scornful glance at the Little Bear, then continued:

“Dat Jack-Pot cabin done be habitated by sporty sport-nuts (sporting gentleman) in de fall when ducks am ripe, but not at de present time. No sah! It got up-to-date comoconveniences (accommodations and conveniences). It am stored with nourishin’ wittles an’ terbacker. ’Sides ’bout fo’ dozen large bottles o’ medicine wid de corks fasn’ wid wire, fo’ use in sickness an’ snake-bite.”

Old Peter smacked his lips and said, “Proceed Mr. ’Possum.”

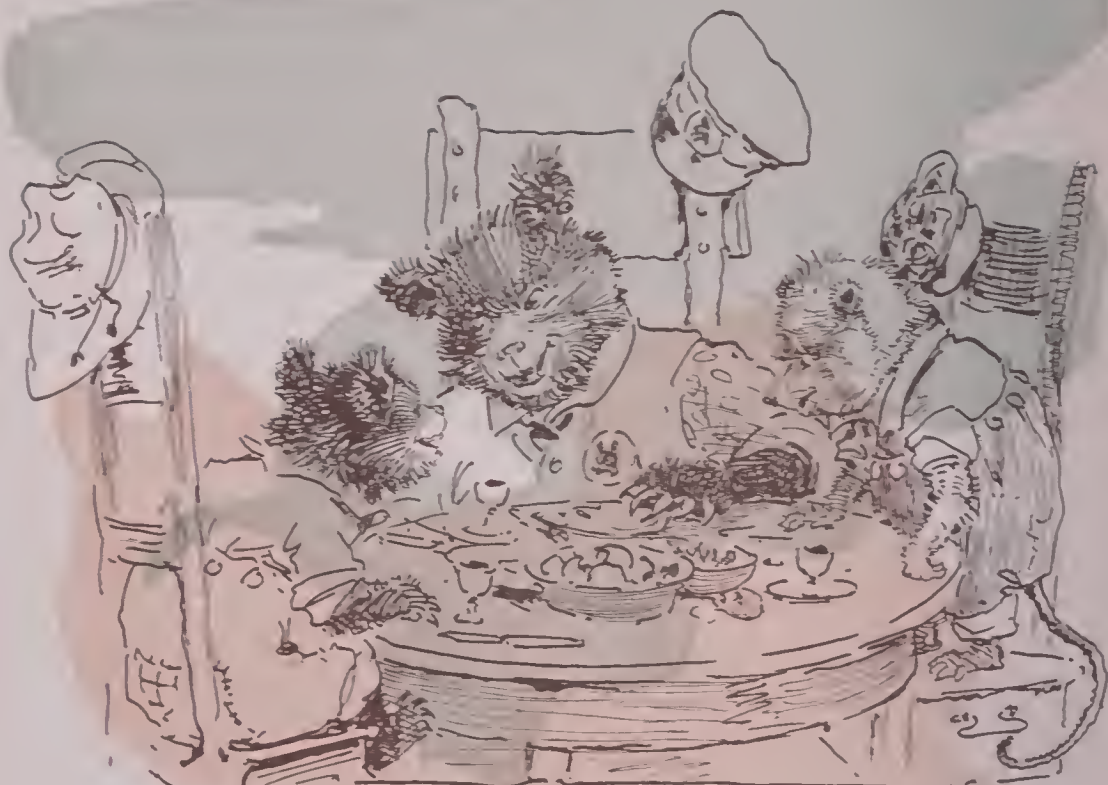
“I made my first ’ficial visit by way o’ de chimbly. I feels I can’t speak too highly o’ de ’commodations inside, fo’ dey got dis here present habitation skin’d to de tail.

“Now, Mr. President Constable, I move we move tonight an’ habitate dat ’sirable country club ’til ducks git ripe an’ de shootin’ commences, an’ dat we—well, we not stay fo’ de sport.”

“I second the motion,” cried Teddy.

“Carried!” said Old Peter.

That night they moved to the Jack-Pot cabin after Old Brother ’Possum had gone down the chimney and opened the outside door.



"Do, please, one of you tell
me where my Gran'ma lives."

XIII

TEDDY and the Old Bear slept late the next morning after they had all moved into the Jack-Pot cabin, but Mr. 'Possum was up bright and early. The first thing he did was to climb up the chimney to have a look around. He wanted to see if everything was all right. But just as he stuck his head out of the chimney top he almost bumped into a red squirrel who tried to scuttle past him on his way down without even saying "Good morning."

The Old 'Possum grabbed Mr. Squirrel by the throat and had it out with him right then and there. The Squirrel tried to scratch and bite and talk back, but as he felt the grip of the 'Possum's tail around his waist with his front legs pinned close to his sides, he soon gave in and was obliged to listen. The Old 'Possum

called him a sneak-thief and shook him until his teeth rattled.

Nearly all the world knows that the red squirrel is what Mr. 'Possum called him and that he is saucy and insolent, a tale bearer and the worst disturber of peace in all the big woods. The 'Possum also knew of all his faults and did not hesitate to speak of them. "Besides," said he, "yo' are a notorious robber o' birds' nests an' yo' sucks eggs to boot." Then he warningly said, "Looky here, Guy Fawks, yo' mus' stay 'way from dese here premises fo' I'se de new janitor, de butler, de housekeeper, de cook, an' lan'lo'd. An' yo' privilege o' visitin' here am cancelled from dis mawnin henceonward."

Mr. 'Possum then went back down the chimney and opened the front door and swept the steps. And for almost an hour afterwards he busied himself about breakfast. Finally Teddy awoke and went about examining things and looking into boxes and stood on a chair so that he could

look on some shelves. Seeing so many things to eat made him hungry, so he asked how soon breakfast would be ready. "Jes' as soon as yo' ready fo' it," said the 'Possum. "Please wake up de President-Constable an' brush yo' teeth an' comb yo' hair befo' yo' come to de table."

Breakfast was ready by the time Old Peter had washed his face and brushed his hair smooth back of his ears. Teddy too had slicked himself up until the 'Possum hardly knew him; his hair was combed straight up, pompadour style.

Mr. 'Possum had made coffee and opened a tin of condensed milk. He had also boiled some eggs which he had found in water glass. These, with bacon he had fried, some dried fruit and a plentiful supply of square crackers were all set ready for their first breakfast in the Jack-Pot cabin. The jolly Old 'Possum felt richly repaid for all the trouble he had taken, when he looked across the little round table at the beaming faces of the big and little bears.

Brother 'Possum politely showed the Old Constable how to manage his egg in an egg-cup, by cracking the top of it. Teddy watched how it was done and tried to manage his in like manner, but when he got his face and ears a good deal smeared, the 'Possum said nothing but soon fetched some paper napkins.

The Old Bear had three helpings of everything on the table, while Teddy had two helpings of everything. But Mr. 'Possum ate sparingly. The others wondered why he did not eat more, but we must not forget that the 'Possum was up and around nearly an hour before the others were awake. And besides, has anyone ever heard of a good cook starving?

After they had all finished eating Old Peter complimented and warmly praised his faithful servant for serving such an excellent breakfast. He said, "Now will you be so kind as to tell us where you learned to cook?"

"By watching de cook what cooked fo' de

sport-nuts dat oc'py dese premises las' fall," promptly answered the 'Possum, "fo' I had 'com'dations in de lof' wid outside entrance an' a knot hole convenient fo' observation, an' I tried to make de bes' o' m' opportunities."

"What is it, Sonny?" said the Old Bear, who noticed that Teddy was trying to get a chance to say something.

"Oh, do please! Won't one of you tell me where my dear old Grandma lives?"

"Looky here, Elmer," hastily spoke the 'Possum, "hain't yo' done satisfied wid dis boarding house? Do yo' ca'c'late yo' ol' Grannysnapper know mo' 'bout cookin' dan I does? Fo' two cents I'd tell yo' jes' whar to fin' yo' ol' Gran—" Here Mr. 'Possum was interrupted by a knock at the door.



"Then quickly slammed it again"

XIV

THE Old Bear sent Teddy to answer the knock, while he himself took the precaution to step into a closet and close the door; Mr. 'Possum hurriedly passed through the open fireplace and half way up the chimney.

Teddy cautiously opened the door about two inches without loosening the chain and peeped out. He was pleasantly greeted by Mr. Fox.

“ 'Lo, Elmer! How-dy-do! How's the rest of the folks?” And without waiting for an answer he pushed his paw through the crack of the door for a shake. The Little Bear grasped and held it while he called for Old Peter. The Old Bear came from his retreat in the closet and took the extended paw and held it while Teddy loosened the chain and opened the door.

“Is there anything I can do for you?” said the

Bear after the Fox was hauled inside and the door closed.

Now the Fox was fighting mad at the rude treatment he had received, but he was either afraid, too much of a gentleman, or too foxy to show it, so he said, "I'm only making a neighborly call, Mr. Bear, and I want to wish you the very best of luck in your new home."

Old Peter smiled and nodded politely while he waited for the Fox to say more. "I noticed you moving in here last night," he continued, "as I was returning from a call on a sick friend."

"Did yo' save de feders?" interjected the 'Possum, who had by that time slid back down the chimney and joined the company.

"Um! Well—I— By the way, speaking of feathers, that reminds me; would you people like to have a nice featherbed? I have an extra one, very fine, mostly goose feathers which I would like to exchange for something use—"

Just then *he* was interrupted by a knock at the door.

The Old Bear quickly pulled the Fox into the closet with him, and the 'Possum sought safety again in the chimney, while Teddy went to see who it was at the door.

“Well, by heck! I’ll be skinned!” ejaculated Old Grinnie, the 'Coon, when the Little Bear opened the door, “if ’tain’t my ol’ friend Elmer! And I’m Jack-whoopin’ glad to see you,” and gave the Little Bear a double paw shake.

Then Old Mr. 'Possum, who had overheard enough to reassure him that all was right, came scrambling down the chimney to welcome his old friend.

“Well! well! well! Grinnie, old pal, ’fi ain’t Jack-whoopin’ glad yo’ looked in on dis peaceful fambly.”

Just then the Old Constable and Mr. Fox stepped out of the closet. At the sight of the Old Bear, the frightened 'Coon bolted for the

door, but Teddy barred the way and laying a reassuring paw on his old friend's shoulder, said:

“Wait a minute, Brother 'Coon, I want to make you acquainted with Mr. Peter, the Constable of Bruintown.” The Old Bear greeted the 'Coon politely and heartily shook his timid paw.

“Oh! I say, Teddy, don' yo' be goin' to give Ol' Grinnie a knock-down to de feder dealer?” cried Mr. 'Possum.

“I beg pardon,” said the Little Bear. “Coony, meet Fox.” The Fox bowed very stiffly while Mr. 'Coon only stared, but neither had a word to say to each other. Mr. Bear could not help noticing the coolness between these neighbors, so he asked them all to be seated and passed his tobacco pouch to Mr. 'Coon and said, “Let's smoke. Try this special brand and pass it to Mr. Fox. When your pipes are all going, I want to say a few words for the good of us all.”

After their pipes were filled and Mr. 'Possum had politely helped all with flint and punk to a

light, he then filled his own old short-stemmed clay pipe with black perique tobacco from his own pouch. He had just struck a spark and was blowing on the punk to get his own light, when they were all startled by loud knocking at the door.

The Old Bear again quickly slid into the closet, taking the Fox with him, and Brother 'Possum again sought protection up the chimney, taking his old pal, Grinnie 'Coon along with him, while Teddy—Didn't it seem cowardly for them all to hide and leave the poor Little Orphan Bear to always face the danger?—Well, anyhow, Teddy very cautiously opened the door only about an inch. Then he slammed it shut again and braced himself against it.



"Now Poss," said he, "I want you to be spokesman and conduct a Parley."

XV

TEDDY called loudly for help and braced himself more firmly against the door, but not even the Old Bear at first came to his rescue. The knocking continued louder than ever.

Then came fierce howls and angry threats from a Wolf. This brought Mr. Bear promptly from his closet. He at once took his place against the door and whispered to the Little Bear to summon both Brother 'Possum and the 'Coon. "Then open that closet door," said he, "and tell Fox that he too is urgently wanted."

When Teddy went to the fireplace he found Mr. 'Possum prostrate on the hearth. The shock of hearing the Wolf's howls had upset his nerves, causing him to faint and tumble back down the chimney. When Teddy tried to summon the 'Coon, he found he had climbed nearly to the

top of the chimney. But after much persuasion he came down and in a broken voice asked the Old Constable if there was anything he could do for him. When the howls and loud knocking outside had ceased for a second or two, so that Peter could make himself heard, he told the 'Coon to bring his pipe and tobacco. "I'll bet my hide against a bear rug," thought the 'Coon as he went to do as he was bid, "that the poor old fellow has been frightened out of his wits."

The Wolf outside had evidently been joined by his mate, for the yelping of two voices could then be heard. All the hubbub only caused Old Peter to smile, for he had a plan of his own of teaching a lesson to these daring highway-wolfmen.

Mr. Bear's smile seemed to convince both 'Teddy and the 'Coon that all was not lost, for they went and really succeeded in waking Old Brother 'Possum up, but they had to drag him across the room by the tail before he showed

signs of life. After he was finally awake, he roundly scolded Teddy for pulling his tail and called his old pal, the 'Coon, a "slime-digging crawfish." Then he asked the Constable if there was anything he could do in the cause of peace.

"Yes!" said the Bear in a whisper. "Please light my pipe for me. Then go and help Teddy and Brother 'Coon yank that Foxy coward out of the closet."

When they all three bumped against the closet door at once, the fastenings gave way and the terrified Fox was pulled out by the ears and hauled before Mr. Bear, who explained to them all in low tones between suppressed chuckles and puffs of smoke his plan of action.

"The wolves think," he said, "that they only have the weaker creatures to deal with. They have no idea that they are going to meet a full-grown bear. This is really going to be a surprise party for Mr. Wolf and his lady.

"Now, 'Pos, I want you to be spokesman and

carry on a parley. Do you think your nerves are strong enough, and can I depend upon you?"

"Yo' bet yo' can, Mr. President-Constable," boasted the 'Possum. "I's a regular dare-debil after one o' m' sinkin' spells. If yo' only let me at 'im, I'd mighty soon make hamburger steak outen bof dem wolves an'——"

"All right," interrupted Peter, "I'll trust you. Now when Teddy opens the door about two inches, without loosening the chain, you must say something to them. Then they will push their dirty paws in like that smart Alex Fox did, and I'll grab both wolves and yank them inside. After that we will square accounts with Mr. Wolf and his missus."

All of Mr. Bear's plans for the capture of the wolves were carried out to the letter, for they found themselves helplessly stretched out on their backs before they hardly knew what was happening. Old Peter was standing with a foot on the neck of each. The 'Coon was holding the

tail of one wolf while the Fox firmly gripped the tail of the other.

“Now, 'Pos, you bring the clothesline and I will muzzle these rascals, and you and Teddy may fasten a tin can to each of their tails, and be sure you fasten them good and tight. You may also put a pawful of gravel in each of the tins so that the outlaws will have music to accompany them as they travel from here to foreign parts.”

When all was ready, the muzzled wolves with their rattling tails were turned out of the Jack-Pot cabin.

The rattle of the tin cans was faintly heard in the distance as the Old Bear, the 'Coon, the Fox and the 'Possum were relighting their pipes and Teddy sat contentedly eating from a box of chocolates.



You may drop in — but not by way
of the chimney — and smoke an
occasional pipe with your old friend

XVI

THERE was a peaceful quiet in the Jack-Pot cabin after the hasty departure of the outlaw wolves. Only chuckles of amusement could be heard coming from the Old Bear, the 'Coon and the Fox as clouds of smoke rose from their pipes.

Brother 'Possum had finished his smoke of strong tobacco and, after he had carefully put his short clay pipe away, he joined the Little Bear who generously passed the box of chocolates and said, "Do help yourself, Brother."

The Old 'Possum did help himself, and while Teddy went to prop the door open to allow the dense smoke to escape, he filled both trouser pockets. When the Little Bear returned there were only a half dozen chocolates left; instead of paying any attention to the piggish 'Possum, Teddy decided it was a good time and a good

chance to ask a question he had had in his mind all through the excitement of the last three-quarters of an hour. So he coughed to attract attention, then said, "Surely, some of you must know where my Old Grandma lives; if you do, won't you please tell me? I would—"

Here he was interrupted by the 'Possum throwing the empty chocolate box into the fireplace. And when the 'Coon made a grab for it to see if there were any chocolates left, the sneaking Fox tried to pick the 'Possum's pocket. But he was not quick enough, for the wiry tail gripped his paw and held it until Old Peter came and caught the Fox by the ear and led him back to his seat. Then he called them all to order and said, "Now I want to have a little talk with you all," and turning to the guilty Fox, said, "You, sir, are only a guest here. The door is now open and as soon as I have finished talking you are going out and your visit is at an end. Hereafter the only communication you will have

with this establishment will be confined strictly to the business of barter and trade and there will be mighty little of that.”

The Fox hung his head and said nothing. He did not even look foxy now, he only looked sheepish.

Then turning to the 'Coon, Mr. Bear said, “You, my dear sir, are, I understand, an old pal of Brother 'Possum, my faithful servant, and both he and this orphan Bear are indebted to you for some past favor—er—I think it had to do with honey and leaves, did it not?”

“It mos' suttinly did,” spoke the 'Possum, “an' chickens, an'—” Then he clapped his paw over his mouth to keep himself from telling too much.

“Well, anyhow,” continued Peter, “you may drop in—but not by way of the chimney—and smoke an occasional pipe with your old friend. Meanwhile if you have anything to barter or trade, we are always open to business.

“It occurs to me just now that we must have a night watchman; I will appoint you to that position, and if you are willing, you may serve us in that capacity.”

Old Grinnie, the 'Coon, was so overcome by these flattering remarks that he could not speak, and he only politely bowed his thanks. Then the 'Possum passed him three chocolates and went to the door to have a word with Old Jim Crow who had just called.

“Do ask him to step inside,” said the Constable, “for I want to speak to him.” When Jimmie came in he croaked, “Good morning!” and flew on the table and began helping himself to the scraps left from breakfast, but all the while kept an eye on the Fox.

The Old Bear told Jim that he had just engaged a night watchman for the Jack-Pot cabin, but they wanted a day watchman also, and that he thought he was just the man—or bird for the job. The details of the arrangement

he said he was going to leave to his faithful servant, and advised them to talk the matter over right away.

Old Brother 'Possum then stepped up to the Crow, who still had his eye on the Fox, and was just finishing the last of the scraps, saluted him and said, "Shun!! Looky here, Jim, while yo' am welcome to de leavin's from de rich folks' table, hereafter yo' gwine to 'ceive dem on de outside, an' yo' not to be 'lowed to come in an' track up de table."

"Caw! caw! caw!" answered the Crow.

The 'Possum understood this to mean "Sure, Mike! Anything you say."

"If yo' done agree to take de job an' keep a bird's eye look down on dese premises, de lef' over scraps gwine to belong to yo'."

"Caw! caw! caw! caw!" came the answer, which the 'Possum understood to mean, "You fathead! I'd do that anyway and steal the scraps to boot."

“There will be a chance,” the ’Possum went on to say, “fo’ yo’ to earn a li’l extra, if yo’ keep yo’ eye skinned for a bee-tree an’ repo’t de same.”

“Caw! caw! Haw! haw! haw!” This meant, “Right-o! While you and your gang rob the bee-tree, I’ll loot your Jack-Pot joint.” Mr. ’Possum did not really know what it meant. But he reported that he had made satisfactory arrangements with Jim Crow, who was delighted to earn an honest living.

The meeting then broke up and Mr. Fox sneaked off, but Jim Crow still kept an eye on him.



“Lemme see yo’ tongue! Yes.
Um Hum! Well, yo’ on’y need
exercise.”

XVII

FOR days and weeks after that first eventful day in the Jack-Pot cabin, the domestic affairs of its strange occupants went without serious trouble.

But as we said before, Old Bear Peter, the Constable, was notoriously lazy; still, as he was the head of the family, both Teddy and Brother 'Possum obeyed all his commands. Jim Crow came regularly for his scraps and neighborhood gossip, and Old Grinnie, the 'Coon, was not far behind in his devotion to the Jack-Pot. He exchanged an occasional pair of spring chickens—the early crop of broilers were then just getting ripe and were quite plentiful—for a bit of smoked bacon and a paper bag full of dog biscuits.

One morning, when the 'Coon's back was

turned, and he was having a whispered talk with the 'Possum about whether Teddy would ever find his Grandmother, Jim Crow stole three dog biscuits and was just returning for the fourth when he was discovered. It looked for a minute as though there was going to be trouble.

“By the five black rings on my tail! Jo 'Pos” —the 'Coon always called his old pal “Jo” —“if I don't, one of these mornings, wring that thieving Crow's neck.”

After the 'Possum had made good Brother 'Coon's losses, he said, “Yo'll make de mistake o' yo' life, if yo' does, Grinnie. Fo' Ol' Jim done be a good-luck bird, even if he do steal ev'ything what not nailed fas'. Besides de Constable am sho'ly becomin' attached to de black rascal.”

“Caw! caw! Hoop-a-law! Haw! haw!” screamed the Crow from an overhead limb. This meant, “Cut the cackle, both of you bottle-nosed tadpole eaters.” Then he threw a dog biscuit, which struck the Old 'Coon square between the

eyes. The 'Coon was so angry his old pal had to hold him. He wanted to climb the tree to get at the Crow.

Only a few mornings after the Crow-'Coon affair, while Teddy was busily sweeping the cabin doorsteps, who should show up but old Mr. Fox. He wanted to trade a tough old rooster for a strip of bacon, three pounds of peanut brittle and a tin of biscuits. But Old Peter overheard, through his open bedroom window, the Fox's unfair attempt at barter, and gave such a loud fierce growl, that the Fox ran off as fast as his legs could take him, and left the tough old bird behind. Later, the same day, Mr. 'Possum gave it to an old Badger, who rather reluctantly carried it off.

It might have been that the Old Bear was living too high, for he was growing fatter and fatter every day. One morning he awoke late and complained of a headache. Brother 'Possum looked troubled.



“It’s prob’ly overfeeding,” he thought to himself; then another thought occurred to him. “He only had chicken meat lately. I do hopes he not want a change o’ diet, something wid mo’ fat.” Then he happened to think of the four dozen large bottles of medicine in the closet. He brought a bottle and opened it. The old patient took only a tablespoonful at first.

“Good stuff, ’Pos!” he said. “Why I feel better already. I’m going to cure myself all at once. This medicine might spoil if it is left to stand, so here goes the balance of it now.”

The old fellow did look a lot brighter as he handed the empty bottle to Teddy, who smelled the cork and passed the bottle on to Brother ’Possum. He tasted a few drops that were left and then winked at the Little Bear, who followed him outside.

“Oh!—I—I—say! El— Teddy, do yo’ rec’lect if de President-Constable ’casion’ly felt poo’ly while he done sojourn in Bruintown?”

Teddy's face was a puzzle. He had never been a talebearer and he did not want to become one now. So he said, "I—I—think Mr. Peter is cured enough with one bottle, don't you think so yourself, Brother?"

"Yes sah! I sho'ly does, an' de few drops what I get o' de leavin's done convince me dat I might be taken poo'ly soon myself an' need to be cu'ed by de same remedy. An' if dat be de case, I might neglec' m' duties in de Jack-Pot cabin.

"Now den, Mista Teddy! de case stan' 'bout dis-a-way. De patient am cu'ed by de one bottle he done took, an' *I* shows sim'tums o' needin' de same kin' o' medicine after de few drops I taste! An' yo' yo'self—lemme see yo' tongue! Yes, Um hum! Well yo' on'y need exercise. I s'posen yo' already un'stand I's de butler o' de Jack-Pot an' done carry de key to de closet whar de medicine live. Now seein' we's all in tol'able good health, an' de medicine am lock'd up, I's

a min' to cas' dis here key to de fishes in de lake. But I don' min' tellin' yo', Teddy, it nearly break m' ol' heart to part with it."

Then the 'Possum made a motion of throwing it, but the Little Bear, who chanced to notice it still in Mr. 'Possum's paw, said, "Why don't you throw it?" " 'Scuse me! I sho' done fo'got to let go o' it." Then he really did throw it, and Teddy saw where the key struck the water and he was very glad of it.



The Coon and old Jim Crow both spoke at once
"I've found a bee-tree"

XVIII

DAYS and weeks sped past and the time drew near when the duck season would begin. Teddy, the Old Bear and Brother 'Possum all knew that they must soon clear out of the Jack-Pot cabin.

Two questions were disturbing Teddy's mind; one was—and he asked himself this question often—"How soon would the Old Constable attempt to take him back to Bruintown?"

The other question was, "Have I even a ghost of a chance of *ever* finding my Grandma?"

Neither of these important matters appeared to concern Old Peter or the 'Possum in the least, for, if Brother 'Possum ever gave a thought about having to move, he told himself that up to the present time he had always managed to get along pretty well, and that it would be time to worry when the time to worry came. Besides,

and he winked at himself as he thought of it, for he knew some things might happen soon.

And as for the Old Bear worrying, just to look at him was enough. He was too fat to bother his head. His stomach was all he cared for. "Great Scott!" thought he, "haven't I a right to a little rest from eternally trying to keep the Bruintown scallywags in order? Anyhow, that incomparable 'Possum—the best servant a bear was ever blessed with—will manage things some way or other when the time comes to clear out of the Jack-Pot.

"As for that little tike, Teddy, I've grown very fond of him, and if I'd had him all the time, I'd made a real bear out of—"

Here his thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of his faithful servant who saluted and said:

"If it please yo' honor, Mista President-Constable, bof de day watchman an' de night watch am 'sembled in de front yard lookin' as do dey

gwine to bus' wid important news corked up inside da skins—da min's I mean."

"Sho' 'm in," commanded Mr. Bear.

The 'Coon and Old Jim Crow both spoke at once:

"I've found a bee-tree," said Mr. 'Coon.

"Caw-waw-haw!" said Jim, meaning "I have found a bee-tree."

"Lead the way," cried the Old Bear, as he followed Mr. 'Coon out of the front door. The Crow wanted to stay behind and keep cabin, but the 'Possum gave him one look and pointed to the open door. Jim took the hint and waited outside while Teddy and the 'Possum got a couple of pails, closed and bolted all the windows and locked the door. Then the Crow led them to the same old bee-tree that they both had known so well in the past. Old Grinnie and the Bear were there ahead of them, but both hesitated about tackling the ticklish or stinging job.

Brother 'Possum and Teddy showed them the trick of daubing their noses. When all were ready, Mr. 'Possum and the 'Coon climbed up and began passing down the well-filled honeycombs. The Old Bear caught them and, when one pail was filled, sent Teddy to carry it off for a distance, and when he went back to help with the other pail, Jim Crow tried to steal a honeycomb; but the old bird got himself badly messed up with honey and the bees followed and tackled him with a vengeance. Jim soon beat a retreat with most of the swarm of bees in pursuit.

When both pails were full, the robbers all ate a lot themselves, and still there was oodles of honey left, so they ate *that* to save it.

The journey back to the Jack-Pot was very slow. The 'Possum, the 'Coon and the Little Bear were all three so filled with sweetness that they could hardly walk, and the fat Old Bear had not only his own inside load to carry, but he had to carry both pails. "I's mighty sorry,

Boss,” said Mr. ’Possum once, when they all rested, “dat I can’t he’p carry de pails.”

“So’m I,” said the Little Bear.

Then a bright idea occurred to Mr. ’Coon and he said, “Now if El— I mean Teddy an’ Ol’ Jo ’Pos will help me to eat some out of the biggest pail, it might make the load balance better.” Then he looked at his old pal and Teddy, who both nodded, “Yes.” So the three ate again while Old Peter rested and smoked his pipe.

That night both Brother ’Possum and Teddy had the tummy-ache. Mr. ’Coon waddled off to attend to his duties, but he only went a short distance and fell asleep on the ground under the tree where Jim Crow roosted. Poor Jim nursed a sore head and talked in his restless sleep that night.

But the Old Constable of Bruintown slept like a brick in the Jack-Pot cabin.



They were eager to be included in the party
but not inside the skins of some of the other guests

XIX

ONE evening at the close of an uneventful day, after both Teddy and the Old Bear had gone to bed, Brother 'Possum sat smoking on the door-step. He often smoked a good-night pipe of his extra strong mixture before climbing to his attic room "with outside accommodations."

Just as he was knocking the ashes from his pipe the night watchman came up the path leading from the lake. "'Lo, Jo 'Pos!" said Mr. 'Coon. "'Lo, Grinnie, ol' pal!" responded the 'Possum, "yo's jes' de man I done had skippin' 'roun' in my min'. Light that ol' corncob pipe. Here, try dis mixture an' see how real 'baccy tastes once. Yes, sah! It am a trifle strong, but ol' codgers like us git usen to it."

They smoked in silence for a while. Thoughts of the coming changes at the Jack-Pot occupied

both their minds. Pretty soon Mr. 'Possum began a whispered conversation, punctuated with an occasional gesture. The 'Coon nodded, "Yes, yes," a few times, then laid his paw on his old friend's shoulder and said:

"Why, that seems to agree with what Old Jim's telling every one he meets and screaming it from the tree-tops besides, but everybody knows what a—oh, well, you know Jim as well as I do."

Brother 'Possum thought for a minute, then said:

"For two cents, Grinnie, I'd take de night off, an' 'f yo'll jine me, we might look in on some o' de ol' neighbors. Will you go?"

Old Mr. 'Coon readily consented and they both shuffled off through the big dark woods. They talked of Old Peter's long absence from his official Bruintown duties and of Teddy's low spirits as the time drew near when the Jack-Pot cabin must be vacated.

By and by they came to Old Miss Hoo hoo's dead tree.

“ 'Lo, sis! Is yo' at home?” cried Mr. 'Possum.

No answer.

“ 'Sposen yo' call, Grinnie.”

“Bally wally hoo hooo! Wake up, ol' gal. A pair o' Jack-whoopin' ol' sports come a-visitin'.”

No answer.

While they rested and waited for Miss Owl's return, Brother 'Possum unfolded a plan to his old friend for a surprise party blow-out to take place the night before leaving the Jack-Pot cabin. The 'Coon's little eyes sparkled with delight as he listened. He agreed to nearly all the 'Possum's suggestions, and was debating a minor point when Miss Owl returned.

After the usual greetings were gone through with, and casual mention of duck hunting from her point of view, Miss Hoo hoo—whose word could always be trusted—confirmed the neigh-

borhood gossip concerning the affairs of both Old Peter and Teddy. She said everyone spoke well of the Little Bear, but she was sorry she could not say as much for the Old Constable of Bruintown. Still that might be because he had made enemies as guardian of the peace in the north woods. However, the Old Owl readily agreed to be one of the surprise party.

The 'Coon and the 'Possum then hurried along to visit the Muskrat family. They had not heard the woods gossip, or if they had, they preferred not to repeat it. Both Mike and Molly Muskrat were delighted to be included in the select surprise party and begged to be allowed to bring the junior Muskrats, promising they would surely be on their best behavior.

Next the 'Possum and 'Coon called on Mr. Fox. He looked, if possible, foxier than ever, and was doubly delighted to see them. Needless to say the old boy accepted the party invitation and generously offered to bring something him-

self. He was firmly told "No," and at the same time put on his honor not to carry off anything that didn't belong to him.

The 'Possum and his pal then went out of their way to call on a family of Rabbits. They were eager to be included in the party, but not inside the skins of some of the other guests. In fact they asked for, and were given, a safe conduct both coming and going.

Jim Crow was just starting on his early morning rounds when he met the 'Possum and the 'Coon on their return. Jim readily entered into the party plans and volunteered some startling information that both Grinnie and Brother 'Possum hoped might prove true.

Teddy had risen and was sweeping the Jack-Pot steps when the tired night prowlers returned. The Little Bear wondered why Brother 'Possum looked at him so queerly as he busied himself preparing breakfast.

"Now, whiles yo', Mista
boss Peter, an' Teddy
res' yo'selves, an' take
a short nap; Grinnie
'll hep me scrape up
a lil snack o' eats."



Frank VerBeck

XX

THE season for shooting was to open at Black Duck Lake on the fifteenth of the month. Teddy was so depressed by the twelfth that Old Brother 'Possum had all he could do to keep his own courage up to his usual standard. If it had not been for the secret locked within his furry breast he, too, might have felt blue.

The Little Bear asked his old friend, as he set down a pail of water from the spring, whether Mr. Peter had said anything lately about returning to Bruintown.

"No, chil', he sholy done not mention it."

"Well, anyhow," said Teddy, "I'd much rather take my chances alone in the big woods as I did when I had the good fortune of meeting you. Please! Please! dear Brother 'Possum, can't you find out from some of the woods people

where my Grandma *does* live? She would be so glad to see me, and you, too, I'm sure, if we could only find her. We would both be a comfort to her, for she never has been happy since my Old Granddaddy Dan was captured and put into a big ugly circus. Oh, 'Pos! I'm going to cry if I don't stop talking about it."

Old Brother 'Possum laid one paw on the Little Bear's shoulder and gave him an affectionate pat on the back with the other and said:

"There, there, Sonny, cheer up. Yo' knows I'd be pow'ful pleased to visit yo' Ol' Granny-snapper, and I feels in my brittle bones yo' cryin' soon gwine to be turned to laughin'. Anyhow, yo' better pitch in and he'p wid some work I got laid out to—why, if here don' come Ol' Grinnie! He gwine to lose he job o' watchin' de Jack-Pot, but *he* suttinly done look chipper 'nough now."

After Mr. 'Coon had deposited a good-sized bundle of something in the kitchen, the 'Possum said:

“Come ’long, Grinnie, le’s all hol’ confab (conversation) wid de Boss-President-Constable, fo’ he done show signs de firs’ time dis mawnin o’ havin’ a case of de slumpy slumps.”

After a few minutes’ talk, the Old Bear came out with the rest, looking a little more cheerful. They had decided to move soon and give the sport-nuts plenty of time to restock the Jack-Pot, if they found it a little short of provisions and some other things.

“We all done grow so fon’ o’ de place,” said Mr. ’Possum, “dat I propose we selec’ a few tokens les’ we fo’git de good time we had. De sporty-nuts can fin’ more in de market whar dese come from.”

As no one offered objection, the ’Possum and the ’Coon made selections and they all marched off with heavy loads. They wended their way back to the cave where they had last lived. All worked with a will and were very tired that night after they had made three trips.

“I’s al’ys hearn tell,” said Brother ’Possum, “dat Friday am an unlucky day to leave, so le’s spend dis las’ night in de ol’ Jack-Pot. Now whiles yo’, Mista Boss Peter, an’ Teddy res’ yo’selves an’ take a short nap, Grinnie ’ll he’p me scrape up a li’l snack o’ eats, an’ we call yo’ when it ready.”

For more than an hour Mr. ’Possum and Mr. ’Coon worked like beavers at preparing a feast. The ’Coon opened several tins of sardines and salmon, yes, and baked beans and ox-tongue, to say nothing of other delicacies. Then there were the chickens he had brought in the package. These Mr. ’Possum fricasseed, fried and roasted and made oodles of gravy. All the invited guests’ tastes were considered.

When the big table, the kitchen table and even the card table were all nicely laid, the guests began to arrive, and during the good-natured confusion of finding their places, Mr. ’Coon departed on some special business. When

all were seated and quiet restored, Brother 'Possum woke up the Old Bear and Teddy and led them in where the guests were all expectantly waiting.

Both Old Peter and the Little Bear were speechless with surprise. The happy company cheered and shouted with delight, and two of the junior Muskrats climbed on the table in their excitement.

The Old Bear took one of the empty seats at the head of the big table and Teddy was seated at his left. Everyone looked at the empty seat on his right and wondered who was to occupy it.

Brother 'Possum took a seat at the end of the kitchen table, the seat beside him being reserved for Brother 'Coon. The Old 'Possum stood on his chair and cleared his throat as though he were going to say something. Just then they heard the click of the front door latch, and all quickly turned to see the smiling 'Coon enter, leading a pleasant-faced old She-Bear. It was

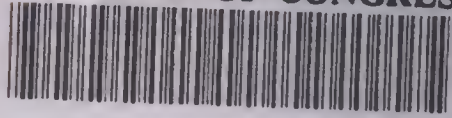
indeed Old Lucy, Teddy's Grandma. The Little Bear leaped into her outstretched arms and was held in a tight embrace. When she chanced to catch the eye of the Old Bear, who had risen and was staring in bewilderment, they both seemed to recognize each other at the same instant, for as she fell into his big strong arms, she cried, "Dan!"

The Old Bear answered with a glad new ring in his voice, "Lucinda!"

The Little Orphan Bear had not only found his Grandma, but he had also found his Granddad.

THE END

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