



Kenneth Grahame
The Wind in the Willows

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KENNETH GRAHAME was born in 1859 in Edinburgh; his mother died when he was five, and he spent much of his childhood living with his grandmother in the Thames valley. He was educated at St Edward's School, Oxford, but instead of proceeding to the University, he entered the Bank of England as a 'Gentleman-Clerk'. He rose to become one of the youngest secretaries of the Bank. He became a friend of F. J. Furnivall, and wrote short pieces for W. E. Henley's journals, and for *The Yellow Book*. His first collection was *Pagan Papers* (1893), but it was his essays about childhood, *The Golden Age* (1895) and *Dream Days* (1898), that made his name. He travelled in Italy, and was a member of the boating fraternity at Fowey in Cornwall. In 1900 he married Elspeth Thomson; they had one son, Alastair. In 1907, Grahame wrote a series of letters to his son containing the adventures of Toad, which he developed the following year into *The Wind in the Willows*. In 1908 he resigned from the Bank on a reduced pension. In 1920, Alastair Grahame was killed (possibly a suicide) when at Oxford; Grahame and Elspeth travelled extensively in Europe, and then led a reclusive life, Grahame writing very little more until his death in 1932.

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Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

PETER HUNT

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INTRODUCTION

The Wind in the Willows may be the greatest case of mistaken identity in literature: it is commonly accepted as an animal story for children—despite being neither an animal story, nor for children. When it was first published, the announcement from its British publisher, Methuen, read:

now at last Mr Grahame breaks his long silence with *The Wind in the Willows*, a fantastic and whimsical satire upon life—or allegory of life—the author’s amusing device being to show the reader the real thing as if it were the play of small woodland and riverside creatures.¹

Equally, Graham Robertson, a close friend of Kenneth Grahame (and a closer one of Oscar Wilde), did not think that the public would mistake its intentions; he wrote to Grahame:

Don’t you think Methuen himself, in his preliminary announcement of the Book, should mention that it is not a political skit, or an allegory of the soul, or a Socialist Programme or a social satire?

It would save critics a good deal of unnecessary trouble.²

It was reviewed, with its adult peers, in the *Times Literary Supplement* (22 October 1908) immediately above Virginia Woolf’s anonymous review of E. M. Forster’s *A Room with a View*. Arnold Bennett, reviewing it in *The New Age* (24 October 1908), observed, presciently:

the book is fairly certain to be misunderstood of the people . . . The author may call his chief characters the Rat, the Mole, the Toad,—they are human beings, and they are meant to be nothing but human beings . . . The book is an urbane exercise in irony at the expense of the English character and of mankind. It is entirely successful . . . and no more to be comprehended by youth than ‘The Golden Age’ was to be comprehended by youth.³

Modern critics of children’s literature agree: Barbara Wall’s analysis reveals a book ‘in which the narrator shows no consciousness at all of

¹ Maureen Duffy, *A Thousand Capricious Chances: A History of the Methuen List 1889–1989* (London: Methuen, 1989), 39.

² Bodleian Library MS Eng. misc. d. 529: 16.

³ Arnold Bennett, *Books and Persons: Being Comments on a Past Epoch, 1908–1911* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1917), 57–8.

an implied child reader for chapters at a time'; and Humphrey Carpenter is clear that '*The Wind in the Willows* has nothing to do with childhood or children, except that it can be enjoyed by the young'.⁴

Even Kenneth Grahame, whose reputation, when *The Wind in the Willows* was published, rested on two books *about* childhood and children's relationships with the adult 'Olympians', *The Golden Age* (1895) and *Dream Days* (1898), did not claim that it was a children's book. Asked to supply 'some material for a descriptive paragraph for the announcement list', he wrote:

A book of Youth—and so perhaps chiefly *for* Youth, and those who still keep the spirit of youth alive in them: of life, sunshine, running water, woodlands, dusty roads, winter firesides; free of problems, clean of the clash of sex; of life as it might fairly be supposed to be regarded by some of the wise small things 'That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck' [a quotation from 'Melampus' by George Meredith].⁵

Not surprisingly, *The Wind in the Willows* does not fit comfortably into the history of children's literature, if at all, although it is often cited as a key text of the first 'golden age' of children's books (1865 to 1914). It has little to do with the child-centred empathy of Lewis Carroll, the romanticism of Frances Hodgson Burnett, or the 'beautiful child' cult exemplified by J. M. Barrie. Grahame was probably influenced by specific books, such as Florence and Bertha Upton's exuberant 'Golliwogg' series, and the subtly ironic miniatures of Beatrix Potter, but the only underlying elements that *The Wind in the Willows* shares with contemporary children's books are a faith in the rural—and in rural England, especially—and an uncomfortable awareness of threats to the status quo. (The book that best sums up these preoccupations is Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill*, published in 1906.)

Nor is this a book about animals, despite the ink that has been spilt attempting to link it to animal fictions. For virtually all of the time the characters are, as Margaret Blount puts it, 'Olympians, middle-aged men . . . doing nothing as becomes animals, yet very much involved

⁴ Barbara Wall, *The Narrator's Voice* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 142; Humphrey Carpenter, *Secret Gardens* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1985), 168.

⁵ Patrick R. Chalmers, *Kenneth Grahame: Life, Letters and Unpublished Work* (London: Methuen, 1933), 144–5.

with the real world . . . For animals, read chaps.⁶ Fred Inglis regards the heroes as ‘the model men of private means whom its readers once hoped to become . . . The four friends translate readily into the heroes of John Buchan and Sapper [and] P. G. Wodehouse.’⁷ Of course, as Roger Sale noted, the characters are more than chaps: ‘It will not do to say that they are human beings, because Grahame’s fantasy depends on his being able to . . . not give them an age, a biography, a past’.⁸ Thus they are partly creatures of fable, unencumbered by at least some of the complexities attached to human life (such as servants and—except in Otter’s case—relatives), and this enables them to be simultaneously universals and many-layered individuals. As Richard Middleton wrote in a contemporary review in *Vanity Fair*: they ‘are neither animals nor men, but are types of that deeper humanity which sways us all’.⁹ (Paul Bransom’s grotesque illustrations for the 1913 American edition, which portrayed the characters as natural animals, make the point.)

The characters very rarely morph into animals (most notably in the virtuoso encounter between Toad and the Barge-woman), and the ways in which they behave as humans are (despite Grahame’s sleight of hand) unrelated to actual animal characteristics (Mr Toad’s hyperactive behaviour is scarcely toad-like). Beatrix Potter, whose characters are animals and humans simultaneously, missed this point when she objected to Toad combing his hair:

Kenneth Grahame ought to have been an artist—at least all writers for children ought to have a sufficient recognition of what things look like—did he not describe ‘Toad’ as combing his hair? A mistake to fly in the face of nature—A frog may wear galoshes; but I don’t hold with toads having beards or wigs!¹⁰

But, for all that, *The Wind in the Willows* is, to the world at large, a classic children’s book, an archetype—perhaps *the* archetype—of

⁶ Margaret Blount, *Animal Land: The Creatures of Children’s Fiction* (London: Hutchinson, 1974), 148.

⁷ Fred Inglis, *The Promise of Happiness: Value and Meaning in Children’s Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 118–19.

⁸ Roger Sale, *Fairy Tales and After: From Snow White to E. B. White* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 168.

⁹ Quoted in Peter Green, *Kenneth Grahame, 1859–1932: A Study of His Life, Work and Times* (London, John Murray, 1959), 259.

¹⁰ Leslie Linder, *A History of the Writings of Beatrix Potter* (London: Frederick Warne, 1971), 175.

what adults think that a children's book should be—retreatist, rural, resolved, full of unthreatening physical pleasure and comfort—and predominantly male.

It has also become, as A. A. Milne wrote in 1920, a 'Household Book': 'By a Household Book I mean a book which everyone in the household loves and quotes continually ever afterwards; a book that is read aloud to every new guest, and is regarded as the touchstone of his worth.' Not, note, a children's book. Twenty years later Milne pursued his point:

One does not argue about *The Wind in the Willows*. The young man gives it to the girl with whom he is in love, and if she does not like it, asks her to return his letters. The older man tries it on his nephew, and alters his will accordingly. The book is a test of character.¹¹

This, then, is a book marketed for and given to children across the world, and read and undoubtedly enjoyed by children—although not all. Margaret Meek, in 'The Limits of Delight', observes caustically that as a child she disliked 'this Arcadian world [because it] is neither brave nor new; it has too few people in it. To meet them is to encounter the same person, the author, variously disguised as a Rat, a Mole, a Badger and a Toad, all equally egocentric and self-regarding.'¹² Paradoxically, this may be one key to what can be read as a complex *roman à clef*: the characters in *The Wind in the Willows* are not complex *as characters*—but as the book spirals from farce to mysticism, from nostalgia to social comment, and from ironic humour to sentimentalism, they emerge as complex reflections of the character of the author and the society in which he lived. As Grahame observed:

You must please remember that a theme, a thesis, a subject, is in most cases little more than a sort of clothes-line, on which one pegs a string of ideas, questions, allusions, and so on, one's mental undergarments, of all shapes and sizes, some possibly fairly new, but most rather old and patched; and they dance and sway in the breeze, and flap and flutter, or hang limp and lifeless; and some are ordinary enough, and some are of a rather private and intimate shape, and rather give the owner away, and show up his or

¹¹ A. A. Milne, 'A Household Book', in *Not That it Matters* (London: Methuen, 1920), 88–9; 'Introduction' to *The Wind in the Willows*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham (New York: Limited Editions Club, 1940), n.p. [4–5]; and see Ann Thwaite, *A. A. Milne: His Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), 225–6.

¹² Margaret Meek, 'The Limits of Delight', in Chris Powling (ed.), *The Best of Books for Keeps* (London: The Bodley Head, 1994), 27–31 at 31.

her peculiarities. And owing to the invisible clothes-line they seem to have some connexion and continuity.¹³

The continuity of *The Wind in the Willows* lies in the reaction of a conservative man (and a conservative society) to radical change. The agricultural depression of 1870–1902 had seriously damaged a rural way of life (lamented in the work of Thomas Hardy, Richard Jefferies, and Edward Thomas); the Boer Wars of 1899–1902 had shown that the British military was not invincible. The working classes were on the move with the Trades Union Amendment Act of 1876—and in 1906 twenty-nine MPs were elected representing the Labour Representation Committee (later the Labour Party). The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies was founded in 1897; the trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895 had focused unsettling light on male behaviour. The countryside was under threat from suburban developments—as Grahame put it in his essay 'Orion' (*National Observer*, November 1892 and *Pagan Papers*), 'the desolate suburbs creep ever further into the retreating fields', and by 1903 cars could travel legally at 20 mph. All of this was profoundly disturbing to a man who described himself in his last lecture ('A Dark Star', delivered to the Pangbourne Literary, Dramatic and Musical Guild in the early 1930s) as a 'mid-Victorian'.¹⁴

The World of the River Bank

There was nothing simple about being a mid-Victorian, and *The Wind in the Willows* starts with a cacophony of symbols. The Mole has about him the air of a respectable suburban clerk, a Mr. Pooter figure straight from the pages of George and Weedon Grossmith's *The Diary of a Nobody* (1892), or one of H. G. Wells's downtrodden heroes, or even one of John Davidson's urban workers ('For like a mole I journey in the dark, | A-travelling along the underground | . . . To come the daily dull official, round').¹⁵ If obviously not a child, Mole begins by doing something childish—he escapes into holiday sunshine (where everyone else is working), and almost at once finds himself in the bohemian world of the River Bank, a world of independent means and subtle class-distinctions. The Water Rat,

¹³ Quoted in Green, *Grahame*, 239, and Chalmers, *Grahame*, 216–17.

¹⁴ Green, *Grahame*, 341, Chalmers, *Grahame*, 286–310.

¹⁵ John Davidson, 'Thirty Bob a Week', *The Yellow Book* (July 1894).

at once an elder brother and knowledgeable friend, is a poet and, like his ducks, a dabbler: as Grahame wrote in a letter of 24 September 1919, 'however narrow poor Mole's means may have been, it is evident that Rat was comfortably off—indeed, I strongly suspect him of a butler-valet and cook-housekeeper'.¹⁶ But most of all, Rat is an insider who knows everyone, including the aristocratic Otter, and in this optimistic world even a humble outsider like the Mole can be accepted into an exclusive society with ease. Rat introduces him as 'my friend Mr. Mole'; Otter replies 'Proud, I'm sure'—'and the two animals were friends forthwith' (p. 11). For Mole, life is suddenly full of possibilities, though he soon finds that they are not infinite. The Wild Wood 'that darkly framed the water-meadows' hides the unreliable underclass, and beyond that, the Rat explains, comes the Wide World:

'And that's something that doesn't matter, either to you or me. I've never been there, and I'm never going, nor you either, if you've got any sense at all. Don't ever refer to it again, please. Now, then! Here's our backwater at last, where we're going to lunch.' (p. 10).

If this is a children's book, then its almost immediate closing down of adventurous possibilities seems, at the least, incongruous. Mole becomes a guest in the weekend world of the (male) middle classes, with lashings of food and drink, manly 'messaging about in boats', and just a touch of the fashionably mystic, as scripted by writers like Robert Louis Stevenson and Jefferies—listening to what the wind whispers in the reed-stems.

Thus far, 'The River Bank' is the rural idyll of a worried generation, but it also seems to belong to a genre that had a vogue in the late nineteenth century, the Thames holiday novel. It bears more than a passing resemblance to Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* (1888)—not least in that Jerome's three main characters are a poetic dreamer, a bank clerk, and a rumbustious man of 'number one size' who sings comic songs (Grahame and Jerome were neighbours in London when *Three Men in a Boat* was being written).¹⁷ That rumbustious man in Mole's *Bildungsroman* is Mr Toad, a landed (and fairly nouveaux riche) proprietor—although he can also be seen

¹⁶ Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d 281: 45.

¹⁷ See Peter Hunt, 'An Adults' Book, a Children's Book, a Palimpsest: *The Wind in the Willows* and *Three Men in a Boat*', *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, 8 (2002), 177–87.

as playing the naughty child to Mole's good child in the River Bank family. Toad has, as the Rat observes, 'some great qualities' (p. 17), including, when in country-squire mode, being a shrewd judge of character. He is the spirit of rebellion, childlike (or teenage-like) in his irresponsibility and mood-swings, but 'so simple, so good-natured and affectionate' that he can be forgiven. He also changes the direction of the book: what seemed to be a river story now becomes a caravan story. Caravans—especially pseudo-gipsy caravans—were another contemporary craze. The Caravan Club had been founded in 1907, and the enthusiastic writing of Gordon Stables (a self-styled 'gentleman-gipsy') is closely echoed in Toad's canary-coloured cart: 'the very finest cart of its sort that was ever built' (p. 19). And so the friends set off into a river-less idyll of 'grassy downs . . . and narrow by-lanes', until they encounter the Modern World, in the destructive shape of the Motor Car. And at that point, having introduced the hint of another popular genre—the motoring thriller—Toad retires from the narrative. Grahame, with his penchant for the classics, seems to have designed the book on epic lines: the first five chapters of the book are Mole's story, and he reaches the nadir of his fortunes midway through these five, in the hollow tree in the Wild Wood. Michael Mendelson suggests that the book is balanced between two plots; one, a 'centripetal' plot, has Mole moving inwards towards the centre of River Bank society; the other, a 'centrifugal' plot, has Toad being flung outwards (at times, literally).¹⁸

Mole's rebellious foray into the Wild Wood takes us into the dark side of the Edwardian idyll, where the woods resemble both Hardy's nature in the raw (in, for example, *The Woodlanders*), and hark back to Dickens's nightmare visions of the corrupt city. But it is entirely characteristic of Grahame's generally cheerful eclecticism that Mole's progress from the depths of terror to the compensatory orgy of warmth and food in Badger's kitchen, is interrupted by an extended parody of another hugely popular fiction, with the Mole playing Watson to the Rat's Sherlock Holmes:

'Rat!' he cried in penitence, 'you're a wonder! . . . You argued it out, step by step, in that wise head of yours . . . If I only had your head, Ratty—'

'But as you haven't,' interrupted the Rat rather unkindly, 'I suppose you're going to sit on the snow all night and *talk*?' (p. 36)

¹⁸ Michael Mendelson, 'The Wind in the Willows and the Plotting of Contrast', *Children's Literature*, 16 (1988), 127.

Once out of the snow, Mole not only finds comfort in the quintessential literary kitchen, but he also meets a father figure. As C. S. Lewis put it, the Badger is an 'extraordinary amalgam of high rank, coarse manners, gruffness, shyness, and goodness. The child who has once met Mr Badger has ever afterwards, in its bones, a knowledge of humanity and of English social history which it could not get in any other way.'¹⁹ And Mole and Badger have an immediate affinity: the working class and the squirearchy are what underlie, underpin, English society: as Badger says, approvingly, to Mole: 'You understand what domestic architecture ought to be, you do' (p. 44).

By the time the Mole leaves Badger's house, he has been absorbed thoroughly into this intimate society, and much of his adventurousness has evaporated: 'he must be wise, must keep to the pleasant places in which his lines were laid' (p. 47). But, within the structural logic of the book, he also has to complete the circle of his narrative by going home to his *real* home, and in 'Dulce Domum' he does so and finds a kind of closure. But his home is not just a small, gently satirized house, with Pooter-ish plaster statuary on the forecourt: it is little England, Thomas Hardy at his most benign, with a skittle-alley, carol-singers, home-made produce from the village shops, and ale in the cellar. And so calm is established before the mirror image, wild ride of the second half of the book begins.

If Mole gladly accepts the conservative values of the River Bank, Toad tries to escape them, and his crime, as Badger observes—and Rat later repeats (p. 121)—is not so much breaking up motor cars, as breaking ranks: 'you're getting us animals a bad name' (p. 63). The River Bank has to defend its reputation. Toad's five chapters could hardly be more different in pace and tone from Mole's, but they frequently mirror them. Both Mole and Toad spend nights in hollow trees—one 'panting and trembling' in terror (p. 31) and one sleeping soundly (p. 91). They both find solace in food, but Badger's male-only kitchen and the field-mice's shopping baskets at Mole End are in direct and respectable contrast to the sensual drippings of the gaoler's daughter's toast and the sumptuously illegal contents of the gipsy's cooking-pot. And both Mole and Toad find themselves in deep water for very different reasons and with very different consequences.

¹⁹ C. S. Lewis, 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children', in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966), 27.

The kaleidoscopic vitality of Toad's adventures spills over into the prose: Odysseus-like he has to 'hold on to the leg of the table' (p. 69) when the siren-call of the motor car reaches his ears; he is dragged off to jail in a welter of language borrowed from W. S. Gilbert ('past the rack-chamber and the thumbscrew-room' (p. 71)); his negotiations with the gipsy smack of George Borrow's *The Romany Rye*, and the recipe for 'the most beautiful stew in the world' evokes both Richard Jefferies and Jerome K. Jerome.

These headlong chapters are punctuated by two quite different interludes, late interpolations into the text, 'The Piper at the Gates of Dawn' and 'Wayfarers All', both of which are often cut from editions marketed for children. They are concerned with adult longing—the first for spiritual fulfilment and reassurance, the second for the exotic 'other'. They are both (like the beginning of 'Dulce Domum'—also a late addition) suffused with ornate poetic echoes of eighteenth-century writers such as James Thomson, and lush images from the Romantic poets through to the nostalgic lyricism of Alfred Austin. This was, as Holbrook Jackson put it, the age of the 'Purple Patch':

In their search for reality, and their desire to extend the boundaries of sensation, the writers of the Eighteen Nineties sought to capture and steep their art in what was sensuous and luscious, in all that was coloured and perfumed . . . The idea of Impressionism also dominated style, but the best writers aimed at intensity, suggestiveness, reality and, above all, brightness . . . They strove to create what was called 'atmosphere'²⁰

Grahame certainly indulges himself, and with the famously sensual appearance of the God Pan, *The Wind in the Willows* veers, or swerves, towards another contemporary preoccupation, the rural pagan. Pan was a figure of both awe and fear; Stevenson, in 'Pan's Pipes' (*Virginibus Puerisque* (1881)) suggests that 'to distrust one's impulses is to be recreant to Pan'; in Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894) published, like *Pagan Papers*, by John Lane, Pan is described as 'a horrible and unspeakable shape, neither man nor beast'. For Peter Green,

The vision of Pan may perhaps stand as the supreme example of nineteenth-century neo-pagan mysticism . . . an extraordinary syncretic compromise,

²⁰ Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties* (1913; Harmondsworth: Penguin 1939) 137, 143.

a projection of Edwardian ruralism, post-Beardsley social opposition, wistful yearning for conformity, an urge towards some replacement for Arnold's God as a comforting Father Figure.²¹

At the end of the chapter, the memory of the vision is erased, much as is the memory of Rat's temptation in 'Wayfarers All'. The idea of the warm south, of a land that could seduce the most conservative bank-worker or River Banker was another recurrent theme for the essayists of the 1890s, and for the Rat, that most conservative of bohemians, to be seduced he has to become someone else, a shrunken Mr Hyde, perhaps. Mole, 'looking into his eyes saw that they were glazed and set and turned a streaked and shifting grey—not his friend's eyes, but the eyes of some other animal!' (p. 103). And it is Mole, now a guardian of River Bank values, who throws him down and suppresses the urge to escape, until the disturbance has passed.

Two other forms of disturbance are suppressed when, in ragged Homeric fashion, Toad comes home. First, the social order is duly restored: Toad Hall is recaptured, with the help of superior discipline and some insider knowledge, and the Wild Wood is 'now successfully tamed so far as they were concerned' (p. 144). Those threats to the status quo that so worried the 'mid-Victorian' in Grahame can, at least in fiction, be resolved, and even the inner spirit of rebellion is tamed: Toad is 'altered' for his own sake, and for the sake of society. As Badger says, 'This good fellow has got to live here, and hold his own, and be respected' (p. 142).

Looked at in terms of its linguistic virtuosity, and the blending of sources popular and classic, serious and frivolous, *The Wind in the Willows* is an eccentrically virtuoso performance. Structurally, it is even more remarkable: as Carpenter observes, it may be fine, but 'one feels that it is often shakily executed, and that the exercise could scarcely be repeated successfully, so near does it come to collapse'.²²

The Wind in the Willows, then, is not always what it may seem to be. But where does such a book spring from?

Life and Other Writing

Kenneth Grahame was a paradoxical character, deeply conservative and conventional, and yet a dilettante writer; an outsider and yet

²¹ Green, *Grahame*, 252–3.

²² Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, 169.

socially well connected and close to the *fin-de-siècle* literary world of London; he was a lover of England and a connoisseur of Italy; and he was a man of great formality, with a remarkable sense of humour.

He was born in Edinburgh; his mother died when he was 5 and he was brought up by his grandmother near the river Thames at Cookham Dean and at Cranbourne in Berkshire. His father, who had problems with alcohol, eventually went to live in France and had no further contact with his family; he died in 1887. Kenneth's childhood seems to have been happy, although if his stories *about* childhood can be taken as autobiographical, he had a somewhat sour attitude towards his guardians. *The Golden Age* begins:

Looking back to those days of old, ere the gate shut to behind me, I can see now that to children with a proper equipment of parents these things would have worn a different aspect. But to those whose nearest were aunts and uncles, a special attitude of mind may be allowed. They treated us, indeed, with kindness enough as to the needs of the flesh, but after that with indifference (an indifference, as I recognise, the result of a certain stupidity), and therefore the commonplace conviction that your child is merely animal.

He was sent to St Edward's School in Oxford, but did not proceed to the University, almost certainly to his lasting regret; instead he entered the Bank of England in 1879, becoming secretary (one of the youngest) in 1898. It has been suggested that Grahame's reserved character did not sit well with the relaxed atmosphere of the Bank, which was 'notable, even notorious, for its tolerance and even encouragement of eccentricity'.²³ And yet, as a writer, he was drawn into literary and 'bohemian' society, a world later vividly described by the young Arthur Ransome in *Bohemia in London* (1907). He lived with W. Graham Robertson, a fashionable artist who knew—apart from Wilde—Whistler, Burne-Jones, and Sarah Bernhardt, and whose portrait by John Singer Sargent (who also painted Roosevelt and sketched Grahame) is in the Tate Gallery (1894). Grahame was taken up by F. J. Furnivall, founder of the Early English Text Society, and was for more than ten years honorary secretary of the New Shakespeare Society. He was almost, if not quite, one of 'W. E. Henley's young men'. Henley, as editor and writer, positioned himself somewhere between the 'aesthetic' movement, the 'decadents', and the traditionalist patriots, and as G. K. Chesterton observed, 'Mr Henley

²³ *Ibid.* 121.

and his young men . . . produce no satire' but only invective. To produce satire, you must have an 'intellectual magnanimity which realizes the merits of the opponents as well as his defects'.²⁴ Grahame, in both *The Golden Age* and *The Wind in the Willows*, proved himself to be a quietly incisive satirist.

He wrote not only for Henley's *National Observer*, but also for the 'decadent' *Yellow Book* (in its rather less scandalous post-Beardsley form after 1895). His first book, *Pagan Papers* (1893), which had a Beardsley frontispiece, was a collection of fashionably whimsical pieces, scattered with classical tags, extolling the life of the weekend-countryman, with nods at the quasi-mystical. One reviewer observed that Grahame was 'only one in a crowd, only one in a generation who turns out a "Stevensonette" as easily and as lightly as it rolls a cigarette'.²⁵

A characteristic paper is 'Loafing' (*National Observer* (24 January 1891) and *Pagan Papers*), which follows the gentleman 'Loafer' who watches what Jerome called the 'provincial' arries and 'arriets' wearing themselves out on the river, and then:

Prone on his back on the springy turf, gazing up into the sky, his fleshy integument seems to drop away, and the spirit ranges at will among the tranquil clouds. This way Nirvana nearest lies. Earth no longer obtrudes herself. . . . His is now an astral body, and through golden spaces of imagination his soul is winging her untrammelled flight.

This could almost be an extract from Richard Jefferies's serious introspective study of nature-mysticism, *The Story of My Heart* (1883), but Grahame debunks the high-flown writing, not as Jerome does, with a joke, but with an earthy manliness:

And there he really might remain for ever, but that his vagrom spirit is called back to earth by a gentle but resistless, very human summons,—a gradual, consuming, Pantagruelian, god-like, thirst: a thirst to thank Heaven on. So, with a sigh half of regret, half of anticipation, he bends his solitary steps towards the nearest inn. Tobacco for one is good; to commune with oneself and be still is truest wisdom; but beer is a thing of deity—beer is divine.

Several of Grahame's early pieces are about characters who have managed to escape from City Life: in 'Long Odds' (*The Yellow Book*

²⁴ G. K. Chesterton, 'Pope and the Art of Satire', *Essays and Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), 120.

²⁵ Chalmers, *Grahame*, 48.

(July 1895)), the narrator meets the ‘Secretary . . . to some venerable Company’ who, after a nightmare realization of his mortality, flees to Venice. But, Grahame reflects sombrely, ‘most of us prefer to fight on—mainly, perhaps, from cowardice’.

Six of the stories in the first edition of *Pagan Papers* formed the basis of the book that made Grahame’s name, *The Golden Age*, a witty and ironic collection *about* childhood, which begins with ‘A Holiday’: ‘Colt-like I ran through the meadows, frisking happy heels in the face of Nature laughing responsive . . . Out into the brimming sun-bathed world I sped, free of lessons, free of discipline and correction, for one day at least.’ His reputation was cemented by further such episodes in *Dream Days*.

Thus this apparently shy Scottish ‘outsider’ developed acquaintances across London literary society; a City banker, he nurtured what was to be a lifelong devotion to southern Europe. He also indulged his passion for boating in holidays in Cornwall, notably at Fowey, where he became a friend of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Austen Purves, and the Commodore of the Royal Fowey Yacht Club, Edward Atkinson (‘Atky’). As he wrote in a letter dated 8 January 1909: ‘Boats are the only things worth living for—any sort.’²⁶ He was, as Quiller-Couch wrote in his obituary, ‘eminently a “man’s man” and keen on all manly sports’.²⁷ His liking for male society can be illustrated by the account of one of his friends and colleagues from the Bank, Sidney Ward, of a weekend at Streatley, on the Thames:

A friend had leant him a fourteenth-century cottage in the main street, and we had a grand twenty-mile walk along the Ridgeway . . . we came home happy and tired, bought some chops and fetched a huge jug of beer from the pub. We cooked our dinner over the open wood fire, and how good the chops were! Then great chunks of cheese, new bread, great swills of beer, pipes, bed, and heavenly sleep.²⁸

Grahame’s marriage to Elspeth Thomson (the sister of Courtauld Thomson, later Baron Courtauld-Thomson of Dorneywood) in 1897 has been portrayed by his biographers as debilitating and sexually arid. Alison Prince suggests that ‘everything indicates that Kenneth found his involvement with Elspeth . . . simultaneously precious

²⁶ Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 527: 76.

²⁷ *The Times*, Saturday, 16 July 1932.

²⁸ Chalmers, *Grahame*, 111.

and embarrassing', and it may be that Elspeth's genuine eccentricity challenged his own rebellious posing. Their son Alastair, known as 'Mouse', was born in 1900, blind in one eye and with a squint in the other. Initially, Grahame seems to have had an 'almost obsessive fatherly interest in his son',²⁹ but later Alastair was brought up by nannies. On one postcard he wrote to his parents, when he was about 6 years old:

DEAR MUM & DAD WILL YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU KEEP IN THE XMAS BOX I GAVE YOU AT XMAS. SINCE YOU WENT AWAY THE HOUSE HASN'T BEEN SO CHIRPY. I WISH YOU'D COME BACK. FROM MOUSE.³⁰

Kenneth continued to work (and probably to write) at the Bank; the even tenor of life was interrupted on 24 November 1903 when one George F. Robinson, 'deemed to be a lunatic', entered the Bank and shot at him (unsuccessfully). In 1908, Kenneth resigned, pleading ill health, although John Keyworth, curator of the Bank of England Museum, notes that

his departure from the Bank is quite mysterious. His resignation letter goes to some lengths to describe his mental state, but this was not entirely confirmed by the bank's doctor and there is a suggestion that a separate on-going dispute with Director (and future Governor), Walter Cunliffe, may have been the cause of Grahame's early departure. For whatever reason, the final pension awarded to Grahame was about half the amount he would normally have expected.³¹

Despite the increasing success of *The Wind in the Willows*, Grahame wrote very little for the rest of his life—he was, he said, 'a spring, not a pump'. His largest project was editing *The Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children*, a selection made with an engaging and positive pragmatism. For example, he wrote in the 'Introduction':

In the output of those writers who have deliberately written for children, it is surprising how largely the subject of death is found to bulk. Dead fathers and mothers, dead brothers and sisters, dead uncles and aunts, dead puppies and kittens, dead birds, dead flowers, dead dolls—a compiler of Obituary Verse for the delight of children could make a fine fat volume

²⁹ Alison Prince, *Kenneth Grahame: An Innocent in the Wild Wood* (London: Allison and Busby, 1994), 143, 194.

³⁰ Bodleian MS Eng. misc. e. 482: 8 (n.d.).

³¹ Annotation of an Exhibition at the Bank of England Museum, Oct. 2008.

with little difficulty. I have turned off this mournful tap of tears as far as possible, preferring that children should read of the joy of life, rather than revel in sentimental thrills of imagined bereavement.

Alastair Grahame, after an unsuccessful school career at Rugby and Eton, became an undergraduate at Oxford where he was killed (or, more probably, committed suicide) in 1920. The Grahames became increasingly reclusive, retreating first to Italy, and then to villages in the Thames Valley. After Kenneth's death, Elspeth skilfully managed his estate and his reputation: she oversaw (closely) Patrick R. Chalmers's *Kenneth Grahame: Life, Letters and Unpublished Work* (1933)—which shares many of the virtues and limitations of the first celebratory book on Lewis Carroll, by his nephew Stuart Dodgson Collingwood (1899)—and she published her own account of the genesis of his masterpiece, *First Whispers of 'The Wind in the Willows'* in 1944. That book has been presented as the whimsical product of a sad and eccentric old lady—but to judge from her correspondence, it seems more likely to be a calculated piece of myth-making (her editor at Methuen, J. A. White wrote, at one point, 'I am not quite comfortable about the deletion or alterations here and there of words and phrases in the letters').³² But with or without her help, Grahame's reputation was secure.

The Wind in the Willows: *Composition and Publication*

One of the foundations of the reputation of *The Wind in the Willows* is the idea that books written (supposedly or actually) for specific children (such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, or *The Hobbit*) are in some way superior to those that are not: it is assumed that personal involvement increases the authenticity of the book and legitimizes what can be seen as an ambiguous relationship between adult writer and child reader.

Certainly there is no doubt that the roots of *The Wind in the Willows* were in oral stories for Alastair Grahame, although this idea (as well as the idea that Alastair was an exceptional child) was sedulously fostered by Elspeth. As early as 1903, Kenneth was writing to her

³² Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 536: 237.

(using the baby-talk they had used in their pre-marriage correspondence), about a day with Alastair:

ee sed softly 'now tell me about the mole!' . . . —there was atory in which a mole, a beever a badjer & a water rat was characters & I got them terribly mixed up as I went along but ee always stratened em out & remembered wich was wich . . . I erd im telling D. arterwards 'and do you no, Nanny, the mole saved up all his money & went & bought a motor car!' . . . You will perceive by this that Mr. Mole has been goin' the pace since he first went his simple boatin spediton wif the water rat.³³

On 15 May 1904, he wrote to Mrs Sidney Ward that 'Mouse' 'had a bad crying fit on the night of his birthday, and I had to tell him stories about moles, giraffes & water-rats (he selected these subjects) till after 12'.³⁴ The American novelist Constance Smedley, who is credited with persuading Grahame to write *The Wind in the Willows*, and with introducing him to the agent Curtis Brown, who was instrumental in getting the book published, reported in her autobiography:

Every evening Mr Grahame told Mouse an unending story, dealing with the adventures of the little animals whom they met on their river journeys. The story was known to him and Mouse alone and was related in a bedtime visit of extreme secrecy.³⁵

Alastair's nurse, Naomi Stott, contributed a story told by 'Mouse':

The Mole and the Water Rat go to Badger Hall in the Wild Wood. On their way it comes on to storm & rain & they get lost. The Mole falls over something hard that hurts him & finds it is a door step scraper then they find a door, & Mr Water Rat's housekeeper says 'What do you mean? You must go round to the front door.' She grumbles but at last lets them in at the back door, & Mr Badger gives them clothes, & supper, & they all have a good time, & the next day they go off.³⁶

After that, and in the hands of Elspeth, the myth became more circumstantial. In *First Whispers* she writes that she had been told by her maid, when Alastair was very young, that Grahame was 'up in the night-nursery, telling Master Mouse some ditty [story] or other

³³ Bodleian MS Eng. misc. e. 481: 8–9f.

³⁴ Green, *Grahame*, 232.

³⁵ Constance Smedley, *Crusaders* (London: Duckworth 1929), 151.

³⁶ Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 524: 277.

about a toad'.³⁷ It might be said that she then over-eggs the pudding: during a visit to a castle in Scotland, she relates, one of the dinner guests returned to the table having overheard Grahame telling a story to Alastair:

I have been listening to him spell-bound through the door which fortunately happened to be just ajar, and I heard two of the most beautiful voices, one relating a wonderful story, and the other, soft as the south wind blowing, sometimes asking for an explanation, sometimes arguing a point, at others laughing like a whole chime of bells . . . I know there was a Badger in it, a Mole, a Toad, and a Water-rat³⁸

In the summer of 1907, Alastair and Naomi Stott went to Littlehampton for seven weeks in July and August, and then came back home to Cookham Dean in early September. Between May and September Grahame wrote fifteen letters to Alastair from Falmouth, Fowey, and from Kensington. They began with Toad stealing the car (later included in Chapter VI), and then formed the basis of Chapters VIII, IX, and XI—Grahame more or less doubled their length for the final version (see the Note on the Text). For Chapter XII, he added only about 500 words, for 'the quality of the letters [was] now such that whole passages are transcribed almost verbatim'.³⁹ Some indication of the way in which the story became more important to its author than to its recipient is the fact that by the sixth letter, there are no preliminaries—only Toad's story. Perhaps even more curious is that the seventh letter—and subsequent ones—begins with '*My Dear Robinson*', because Alastair decided that he wished to be known as Michael Robinson (the association with his father's would-be assassin can only be conjectured) and Kenneth maintained that 'he was incapable of familiarity towards a complete stranger'.⁴⁰

Persuaded by Constance Smedley, working on behalf of the American magazine *Everybody's*, Grahame completed the book, probably finishing the first two chapters by the end of 1907, and inserting 'The Piper at the Gates of Dawn' and 'Wayfarers All' last of all. Given Grahame's reluctance to write, this was something of a

³⁷ Elspeth Grahame, *First Whispers of 'The Wind in the Willows'* (London: Methuen, 1944), 2: a slightly different version had appeared in Chalmers, *Grahame*, 121.

³⁸ Elspeth Grahame, *First Whispers*, 2–3.

³⁹ *My Dearest Mouse: 'The Wind in the Willows' Letters*, ed. David Gooderson (London: Pavilion/Michael Joseph/Bodleian Library, 1988), 144.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 64.

triumph for Smedley: unfortunately, neither *Everybody's* nor anyone else wanted the book. John Lane, who had published Grahame's previous three books, was unimpressed by this strange hybrid. Curtis Brown persuaded a reluctant Methuen to take it, but as the firm would not agree to pay a guaranteed advance, he negotiated 'excellent rising royalties'. He also sent the manuscript to Charles Scribner in the USA:

He said it wouldn't go; but just then he got a letter from Theodore Roosevelt, who was very fond of Kenneth Grahame, and had read the MS., saying that he heard the book had been submitted, and that it was such a beautiful thing that Scribner *must* publish it.⁴¹

The title was rather unstable, too. The typescript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, is called *The Mole and the Water-Rat*; Grahame had also suggested *Mr Mole and his Mates*. His friend, Graham Robertson, had several suggestions:

That title! I should like to call the book 'Down Stream'—I suppose because it is quite irrelevant and has certainly been used before as a title. 'With the Stream'—'Among the Sedges'—'The Garden of Pan'—No good. It may come—as you say—while shaving—yet ever I shave and it comes not.⁴²

The Wind in the Reeds was decided upon—this had been the original title of the chapter 'The Piper at the Gates of Dawn'—and Scribner's 'Fall Fiction, 1908' list advertised the book as such (together with John Fox Jr.'s *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, W. W. Jacobs's *Salthaven*, and Edith Wharton's *The Hermit and the Wise Woman*). It was then pointed out, possibly by Robertson, that W. B. Yeats had published a collection of poems, *The Wind Among the Reeds*, in 1899. Sir Algernon Methuen wrote to Grahame on 2 September 1908,

It's a pity about the title but I think that *The Wind in the Willows* has a charming & wet sound, & if you don't write to the contrary, we will adopt it.⁴³

(The word 'willow' appears only twice in the book: reeds are rather more prominent.)

Arthur Rackham was invited to illustrate it, but was 'too busy illustrating *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'. He eventually illustrated an

⁴¹ Curtis Brown, *Contacts* (London: Cassell, 1935), 60.

⁴² Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 529: 7', 8.

⁴³ David J. Holmes, *'Wayfarers All': Selections from the Kenneth Grahame Collection of David. J. Holmes* (New York: The Grolier Club, 2008), 24.

edition for the Limited Editions Club of New York in 1940; the picture of Mole and Toad loading the boat for the picnic was the last picture that he ever worked on.⁴⁴ Both the British and American first editions were published with a frontispiece—‘And a River went out of Eden’ [Genesis 2: 10] (black in the English edition and dark blue in the American) by Graham Robertson; but while the American edition was bound in plain green cloth, the English edition had an ornate cover by Robertson, the spine showing a be-gloved and be-goggled Toad that bears more than a passing resemblance to a contemporary ‘thriller’, G. Sidney Paternoster’s *The Motor Pirate* (Chatto and Windus, 1903). *The Wind in the Willows* was nothing if not a book of its time.

Scribner’s printed 4,700 copies of the book, and published it on 4 October 1908, four days ahead of British publication; Grahame gave a copy of it to Alastair, inscribed ‘from his affectionate father Kenneth Grahame . . . Cookham Dean, Oct. 1908’.⁴⁵ In England, Methuen printed 1,500 copies and published on 8 October: Algernon Methuen wrote to Grahame the next day: ‘I congratulate you on your charming book—so full of grace & insight. I hope you like the outside—I like the inside. I telegraphed to you yesterday that we should want a 2d edition at once.’⁴⁶

Reception, Influence, and the Critics

Methuen was a little optimistic. As the *St Edward’s School Chronicle* (July 1932) wrote: ‘It was coldly received by his critics, and its sale was slow at first. When I bought my first copy in Malvern, the book-seller remarked that he had wondered when he would sell a copy.’⁴⁷ Arnold Bennett was right: the reviews were generally mystified or dismissive. *The Times* observed that ‘Grown-up readers will find it monstrous and elusive, and children will hope, in vain, for more fun. Beneath the allegory ordinary life is depicted more or less closely, but certainly not very amusingly or searchingly. As a contribution to

⁴⁴ Derek Hudson, *Arthur Rackham, His Life and Work* (London: Heinemann, 1960), 82, 149.

⁴⁵ Holmes, ‘*Wayfarers All*’, 24 and see Iona and Robert Opie and Brian Alderson, *The Treasures of Childhood: Books, Toys, and Games from the Opie Collection* (London: Pavilion/Michael Joseph, 1989), 29.

⁴⁶ Holmes, ‘*Wayfarers All*’, 25.

⁴⁷ Bodleian MS Eng. misc. c. 720: 49–50.

natural history the work is negligible. For ourselves we lay *The Wind in the Willows* reverently aside and again, for the hundredth time, take up *The Golden Age*.’

But its popularity grew rapidly, and it gradually became part of the fabric of British life. Evelyn Waugh read *The Wind in the Willows* to his favourite pupil at Aston Clinton school in 1928.⁴⁸ On 15 April 1934, one Muriel Agnes Arber wrote to Grahame’s widow, Elspeth: ‘the reading of “Dulce Domum” on Christmas Eve has become part of our annual ritual, together with Crashaw’s and Milton’s Nativity Odes, and Lamb’s “New Year’s Eve” and “Valentine’s Day”, and Keats’s “St Agnes Eve”, on their appropriate occasions.’⁴⁹

E. H. Shepard’s illustrations for the thirty-eighth British edition in 1931 became identified with the book—and with Englishness itself: for a time in the 1980s E. H. Shepard’s images from the book were used by the English Tourist Board as a representation of the National Heritage.⁵⁰

It also became part of world culture⁵¹—it was a favourite of United States President Theodore Roosevelt, and Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin. In 1938, Elspeth sold the film rights to Walt Disney for \$2,500 (then £500), and her agent, Curtis Brown, wrote: ‘Disney, of course, would do it as lovingly and poetically as mechanical devices permit.’ He added, wryly, that in any case, ‘Disney is not a bargainer.’⁵² In the event, the result was not one of Disney’s finer moments: the last of six ‘package’ films made by the studio during the Second World War, J. Thaddeus Toad’s adventures (featuring Angus MacBadger) narrated by Basil Rathbone, were combined with a version of Washington Irving’s ‘The Legend of Sleepy Hollow’ as *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr Toad* (1949).

In contrast, A. A. Milne’s stage adaptation, *Toad of Toad Hall*, was an almost unqualified success. It had been suggested to Milne as early as 1921 (on 15 November 1921 he wrote to Curtis Brown: ‘as soon as

⁴⁸ Jeffrey Heath, *The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1982), 23.

⁴⁹ Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 535: 64.

⁵⁰ Tony Watkins, ‘Cultural Studies, New Historicism and Children’s Literature’, in Peter Hunt (ed.), *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1992), 94.

⁵¹ Emer O’Sullivan, *Comparative Children’s Literature* (London: Routledge, 2005), 148.

⁵² Bodleian MS Eng. misc. c. 379: 127, 130.

I got your letter I began sketching it out'⁵³), although it was not produced until 1929 (at the Liverpool Playhouse). Film and television adaptations using live action (such as Terry Jones's 1996 production) or animation have been more problematic, although Alan Bennett's version for the British National Theatre in 1990 has maintained its popularity and its critical reputation.

The Wind in the Willows remains in print in dozens of editions, adaptations, and abridgements. There are sequels, notably Dixon Scott's *A Fresh Wind in the Willows* (1983), William Horwood's 'Tales of the Willows' (1993–9), and Robert de Board's *Counselling for Toads* (1998), which is an introduction to psychotherapy. *Wild Wood* (1981) by Jan Needle is a 'counter-text', telling the story from the point of view of the Wild Wooders.

If *The Wind in the Willows* has been accepted as an iconic book for children, one might expect it to have been influential, but it was Grahame's books *about* childhood that helped to change the course of children's literature. Edith Nesbit borrowed the stance and some of the stylistic mannerisms of *The Golden Age* and *Dream Days*, and by providing a child-narrator gave children a powerful voice which has been widely imitated. Specifically, she reworked 'The Finding of the Princess' from *The Golden Age* as 'Noel's Princess' in *The Treasure Seekers* (1904); in the story 'The Waterworks' (*The Wouldbegoods* (1901)) the narrator, Oswald, describes his sister Alice's birthday presents: 'Besides that Alice had a knife, a pair of shut-up scissors, a silk handkerchief, a book—it was *The Golden Age* and is A1 except where it gets mixed up with grown-up nonsense.'

However, the connection between Grahame, Nesbit, and subsequent children's literature does not hold with *The Wind in the Willows*. As Julia Briggs points out, 'Grahame . . . creates an ideal fantasy world—dreamlike, safe and largely sealed off from the disappointments, embarrassments and sheer muddle of daily life . . . E. Nesbit's fictional world [is] at once less perfect and more vital. The world of her books is as elusive, confused, messy and absurd as the world of lived life'.⁵⁴ There are certainly echoes of Grahame's neo-paganism in Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911) and even in C. S. Lewis's

⁵³ Curtis Brown, *Contacts*, 62.

⁵⁴ Julia Briggs, *A Woman of Passion: The Life of E. Nesbit 1858–1924* (1987; London: Penguin 1989), 189.

'Narnia' sequence (from 1950). The book was one of Lewis's childhood favourites,⁵⁵ but 'Grahame believed that to succeed in reaching Arcadia was, in effect, to kill the imagination itself, while Lewis felt Heaven was the fulfilment of the imagination and the final destination was of the utmost importance'.⁵⁶

The somewhat questionable legacy of *The Wind in the Willows* has been the result of writers imitating the manner, rather than the inner matter of the book. Grahame's rural idyll, in combination (ironically) with Beatrix Potter's illustrations, lies behind Alison Uttley's 'Little Grey Rabbit' series (from 1929), the commercially successful 'Brambly Hedge' series by Jill Barklem (from *Spring Story* 1980), and Katherine Holabird and Helen Craig's *Angelina Ballerina* (from 1983), portraying a nostalgic English countryside and village life with animal characters. Picture books such as Nick Butterworth's *One Snowy Night* (1989) feature a Badger and a Mole prominently, while E. H. Shepard's *Ben and Brock* (1965), perhaps inevitably, has both visual and verbal echoes: 'Ben was astonished to find how large the ancestral home of the Brocks was. It seemed to stretch underground for a long way.' More remote relatives are Colin Dann's *The Animals of Farthing Wood* (1979), William Horwood's *Duncton Wood* series (from 1980), and Brian Jacques's violent 'Redwall' series (from 1986). The most direct imitations of (or tributes to) *The Wind in the Willows* have been Will Nickless's *Owlglass* (1964), *The Nitehood* (1966), and *Molepie* (1967) with their comfortable Club of characters such as Meles Badger, Odysseus Harris (a rat), Mr Popghose (the weasel), and Otter Mullet the fishmonger (the moles are marginalized), with the author's very Shepard-like drawings.

Critical responses to *The Wind in the Willows* have tended to focus on personal and psychological interpretations. On 10 October 1908, Grahame sent Theodore Roosevelt a copy of *The Wind in the Willows*, observing that 'Its qualities, if any, are mostly negative—i.e.—no problems, no sex, no second meaning'. Despite the reluctance of many readers to deconstruct a book to which they have a protective attachment, some critics have refused to take him at his word. Grahame's biographer, Peter Green, thought that Grahame's statement

⁵⁵ Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and Their Friends* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978), 214.

⁵⁶ Jordana Hall, 'Revelation: The Music of Myth and Mysticism in C. S. Lewis and Kenneth Grahame', *Journal of Children's Literature Studies*, 5/3 (2008), 55.

was 'so flagrantly untrue that one's curiosity is at once aroused', while Neil Philip thought that the book is 'a densely layered text fairly cluttered with second meanings'.⁵⁷ Green's book, modelled on John Livingston Lowes's *The Road to Xanadu*, which analysed the conscious and unconscious sources of Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan', set the tone. For example, Green analyses 'Wayfarers All' thus:

Clearly, in this private drama, all three participants represent aspects of Grahame's own personality. Rat is the repressed Bohemian Ulysses, fretting in London and at Cookham Dene, feeling an unformulated migrant urge in the blood. The Sea Rat speaks with the inner voice of the self-tempter: every voyage, each landfall from Corsica to Alassio and Marseilles was one Grahame had already made himself. Mole here is the respectable, conformist side of Grahame, conscientious, practical and loyal, he stands for all the domestic and public virtues.⁵⁸

This kind of analysis can be extended across the whole book: Mole's story exploits 'the Telemachan theme, the motif of father and son in search of each other';⁵⁹ Toad is the frustrated child in Grahame, kicking futilely against convention. Robert de Board's sympathetic psychological reworking of Toad in *Counselling for Toads* may provide insights into Grahame's own feelings towards his father, and to the repressive society around him. For example, Toad's dressing-down by Badger, when he discovers that his father did not think him trustworthy enough to be told about the tunnel, sounds rather different when Toad recounts it to his psychotherapist (a Heron): 'All the others looked at me and I put on a brave face and talked a lot of nonsense to cover my embarrassment, but inside I felt humiliated.'⁶⁰ Such interpretations have been linked to specific biographical elements—Grahame's work at the Bank of England, his social milieu with Quiller-Couch at Fowey, and his success as a writer in contrast to his unadventurous family traditions and solid career.

Equally, the origins of each character and scene have been explored extensively, although they are most likely to be artistic composites.

⁵⁷ Green, *Grahame*, 274; Neil Philip, 'The Wind in the Willows: The Vitality of a Classic', in Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs (eds.), *Children and Their Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 313.

⁵⁸ Green, *Grahame*, 255.

⁵⁹ Lois Kuznets, 'Kenneth Grahame and Father Nature, or Whither Blows *The Wind in the Willows?*', *Children's Literature*, 16 (1988), 176.

⁶⁰ Robert de Board, *Counselling for Toads* (London: Routledge, 1998), 24.

Toad, for example, has been variously identified as Walter Cunliffe (a director of the Bank of England), Oscar Wilde, Alastair Grahame, Horatio Bottomley, Falstaff, and Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (among others),⁶¹ while the River seems to be composed of elements of the Thames and of the River Fowey in Cornwall.

The idea that *The Wind in the Willows* is 'clean of the clash of sex' (the choice of the word 'clean' has not gone unremarked) has been challenged: the virtual absence of women (as, one might note, in *Winnie-the-Pooh*) is as significant as their presence. Where they do appear, or are referred to, they are ciphers (Mrs Otter, the mother weasels), uncomfortably ambivalent (the gaoler's daughter) or threatening and dominant (the barge-woman, and the *female* nurses). All of this, combined with Grahame's preference for male company and (it is deduced) sexually unsuccessful marriage, has led to attention being drawn to the male bonding, not to say homoeroticism, of the book. This in turn has been seen as being linked to, or sublimated in, the quasi-orgasmic food incidents that punctuate the book (culminating in Mole and Rat sleeping together in Badger's food store). Was *The Wind in the Willows* a wry and sly gay manifesto? There has been a certain resistance to this line of thinking. Reviewing Peter Green's biography, Georgina Battiscombe observed:

Is there any really valid reason to suppose that the tragedy of Oscar Wilde 'sank deep into Grahame's impressionable mind', so deep, in fact, that twelve years later 'the core of that terrible episode re-emerged transmuted and scaled down to animal fantasy in the misfortunes of Mr. Toad'? One wonders which of the two, Mr Toad or Mr Wilde, would be the more affronted by this suggestion.⁶²

And, as Alan Bennett observed, 'bachelordom is a status that had more respect (and fewer undertones) in Grahame's day than it has now'.⁶³ Meanwhile, the picture of Toad reaching an ecstatic climax among his bedroom chairs has raised more than one critical

⁶¹ See e.g. Nicholas Tucker, 'The Children's Falstaff', in Nicholas Tucker (ed.), *Suitable for Children? Controversies in Children's Literature* (London: Sussex University Press, 1976), 160-4; Roger Schlobin, 'Danger and Compulsion in *The Wind in the Willows*, or Toad and Hyde Together at Last', *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 8/1 (1998), 34-41.

⁶² Georgina Battiscombe, 'Exile from the Golden City', *TLS* (13 March 1959); Margaret Meek, Aidan Warlow, and Griselda Barton (eds.), *The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading*, (London: The Bodley Head, 1977), 289.

⁶³ Alan Bennett, *The Wind in the Willows* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), xvii.

eyebrow: W. W. Robson suggests that Toad is ‘close to [a] psychopathic personality’, and Seth Lerer suggests that ‘Grahame seems aware of the developments in the psychoanalytic study of aberrant behaviour’ and draws parallels with Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Textbook of Insanity* (translated 1905).⁶⁴

In literary terms, its assumed status as a children’s book has limited the amount of serious consideration that *The Wind in the Willows* has received—to the extent that the matrix of the book is considered inferior, per se. For example:

By embracing the cult of Pan, or by setting out on the open road, Robert Louis Stevenson, Kenneth Grahame, Edward Thomas, and E. M. Forster mapped out imaginative territories [which] expressed varying degrees of ideological engagement . . . What Grahame could not achieve, unlike Forster, was to link his adult experiences to his mythic imagination.⁶⁵

But, as David Sandner has noted, Grahame is ‘ultimately the champion not of Nature but of the Rural’⁶⁶ and there are many things both in the Wild Wood and the Wide World that he did not care to approach. Revisionist readings see *The Wind in the Willows* as a transitional book, charting changes in Edwardian society and their repercussions on the class system.⁶⁷ The most searching of these has been Jan Needle’s novel *Wild Wood*, whose narrator, Baxter the ferret, is the victim first of Toad’s driving, and later of Badger’s high-handed dismissal of Toad’s new car (he is the delivery driver, and loses his job).⁶⁸

⁶⁴ W. W. Robson, *The Definition of Literature and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 138; *The Wind in the Willows: An Annotated Edition*, ed. Seth Lerer (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 132–45.

⁶⁵ William Greenslade, “Pan” and the Open Road: Critical Paganism in Robert Louis Stevenson, Kenneth Grahame, Edward Thomas, and E. M. Forster’, in Lynne Hapgood and Nancy L. Paxton (eds.), *Outside Modernism: In Pursuit of the English Novel, 1900–1930* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000), 145–61 at 148–9.

⁶⁶ David Sandner, *The Fantastic Sublime: Romanticism and Transcendence in Nineteenth-Century Children’s Fantasy Literature* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 68.

⁶⁷ Seth Lerer, *Children’s Literature: A Reader’s History from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 271; Tess Cosslett, *Talking Animals in British Children’s Fiction, 1786–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 7.

⁶⁸ Jan Needle, *Wild Wood* (London: Methuen, 1992), 106–7; and see Tony Watkins, ‘Reconstructing the Homeland: Loss and Hope in the English Landscape’, in Maria Nikolajeva (ed.), *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children’s Literature* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1995), 167.

Surveys of children's literature tend to take less searching views of *The Wind in the Willows*—for example, 'its appeal is ageless and so parents never tire of reading it aloud',⁶⁹ but such assertions are constantly challenged by the book's unstable blend of farce, satire, mysticism, nostalgia, rebellion and repression, worry and security. It is a book deeply embedded with paradoxes, a vital one being that it is (just like childhood) *not* comfortable or safe or unambiguous, despite the best efforts of the author and certain adult readers to make it so. It is this element that perhaps makes *The Wind in the Willows*, as the novelist Howard Spring wrote in the *Evening Standard* (27 May 1938), 'a unifying book that destroys the gulf of the generations'.

⁶⁹ Frank Eyre, *British Children's Books in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 1971), 62.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

This edition is based on the first British edition, published by Methuen (8 October 1908). The Methuen edition replaced Grahame's double inverted commas [“ ”] with single inverted commas [‘ ’]. Minor changes are noted below.

The primary origin of the text was a series of fifteen holograph letters from Kenneth Grahame to his son, Alastair (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Eng. misc. d. 281). They were first printed in a slightly edited version (which removed the non-story material at the beginning of the first five) in Elspeth Grahame's *First Whispers of 'The Wind in the Willows'* (Methuen, 1944), 48–89. A facsimile edition, *My Dearest Mouse: 'The Wind in the Willows' Letters*, appeared in 1988, with introduction and commentary by David Gooderson (London: Pavilion, Michael Joseph, and the Bodleian Library). The first letter briefly recounts Toad stealing the car from the inn (later incorporated into Chapter VI), and the second begins with Toad in jail. The material in letters [2], [3], and [4] (2,400 words) were expanded to form Chapter VIII 'Toad's Adventures' (5,600 words); [5], [6], [7], and [8] (4,000 words) were expanded into Chapter X 'The Further Adventures of Toad' (7,000 words); [9], [10], [11], and [12: 1–7] (5,400 words) were expanded into Chapter XI "'Like Summer Tempests came his Tears'" (7,000 words) and [12: 7–8], [13], [14], and [15] (5,100 words) were expanded into Chapter XII 'The Return of Ulysses' (5,600 words).

Grahame then produced a much-expanded holograph 'fair' copy of twelve chapters on 6mo sheets (8 × 6.75 inches), held at the Bodleian Library (MS. Eng. misc. e. 247 (172 pages) and e. 248 (197 pages)). In these volumes, the first fifteen pages of the chapters 'The River Bank' and 'The Wind in the Reeds'—the chapter later known as 'The Piper at the Gates of Dawn'—have been inadvertently transposed. The first volume (e. 247) begins with the first fifteen pages of 'The River Bank' and then continues from the sixteenth page of 'The Wind in the Reeds', through the final five chapters as published. The second volume (e. 248) similarly begins with the first fifteen pages of 'The Wind in the Reeds' and then continues from

page 16 of 'The River Bank' through the next five chapters as published, up to and including 'Mr. Toad'.

Throughout the 369 pages of the two volumes, there are only 189 minor corrections, the most being in the chapter 'Mr. Badger' (37). Grahame seems to have been undecided as to where to begin the final chapter. At Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. 247: 166, the second half of the page reads:

When it began to grow dark the Rat called them back into the parlour, stood each of them by his own little heap, & proceeded to dress them up for the expedition. He was very earnest about it & the affair took quite a long time. First there was a belt to go around each animal, and then a sword to be stuck into

This is hatched out, and the next page (167) is headed 'The Return of Ulysses' and the paragraph written out again (with some changes, as published), in eight lines. The published narrative then continues on page 168.

A typed and bound version (ten chapters, excluding 'Mr. Badger' and 'Mr. Toad'), titled *The Mole and the Water Rat*, is held at the Bodleian Library at MS. Eng. misc. d. 524. It seems probable, from the evidence of type and paper, that the chapters have been gathered from at least three different sources, and so this is not necessarily the copy used by the original publishers. Notes on the contents page suggest that the chapters 'Mr. Badger', 'The Piper at the Gates of Dawn', and 'Wayfarers All' were the last to be added (in that order).

Bound in with the typescript (at pp. 271a/b–276) are contemporary photostats of two full pages and two pages with three lines of writing on each, which seem to be the rough draft of part of 'The Piper at the Gates of Dawn'. It begins 'crying bitterly' and ends with part of Pan's song, '*Lest the awe should dwell*' (present edition, pp. 78–9). The handwriting, although clearly Grahame's, is far less disciplined than in the 'fair copy' and the text includes several emendations. It is written on lined paper with three vertical lines to the right of the pages, which might possibly confirm the view that Grahame did some of his writing during working hours at the Bank of England (see Peter Green, *Kenneth Grahame, 1859–1932: A Study of His Life, Work and Times* (London: John Murray, 1959), 224). Patrick Chalmers notes that 'A Bohemian in Exile' was submitted to *St James's Gazette* written on Bank of England notepaper (Patrick R. Chalmers, *Kenneth Grahame: Life, Letters and Unpublished Work* (London: Methuen, 1933), 47).

There are hundreds of minor differences between the holograph (e. 247, e. 248), the typescript (d. 524), the first Methuen edition (M), and the first Scribner's (American) edition (S). Indicative examples from the first chapter are:

e. 247, 10 and d. 524, 11: . . . sangwidges . . . ; M: . . . sandwidges . . . ; S: . . . sandwiches . . .

e. 247, 11 and d. 524, 12: half-an-hour; M and S: half an hour

e. 247, 12: best bedroom; d. 524, 13: best-bedroom; M and S: best bedroom

e. 247, 12: dry shod; d. 524, 13 and M: dry-shod; S: dry shod

e. 247, 15: grey gabled mill-house; d. 524, 15: grey gabled mill house; M and S: grey-gabled mill-house

e. 248, 16 and d. 524, 16: old fellow!" And; M: old fellow!" and; S: old fellow!' and

e. 248, 17 and d. 524, 17: said the Otter. And; M and S: said the Otter, and

e. 248, 17: stumble; d. 534: tumble; M and S: stumble

Minor changes have been made in this edition to mistakes or omissions in the first edition:

25 *have recovered from their shock*: the first edition reads: have recovered their shock.

35 *we've had enough*: the first edition reads: we'd had enough

42 *'busy'*: the first edition reads: "busy"

43 *chivvying*: the first edition reads: chivying

48 *we're coming*: the first edition reads: we were coming

82 *snap-dragons*: the first edition reads: snap-dragon

103 *'And you*: the first edition reads: And you

132 *went on the Mole; 'and . . . what she's talking about.'* "O! don't I?" said I. "Well, let me tell you this: the first edition reads: went on the Mole; and . . . what she's talking about." "O! don't I?" said I. "Well, let me tell you this

143 *chivvying*: the first edition reads: chivying

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A CHRONOLOGY OF KENNETH GRAHAME

- 1859 8 March: Kenneth Grahame born at 32 Castle Street, Edinburgh; the third child and second son of James Cunningham Grahame and Elizabeth (Bessie) Ingles. The birth was attended by Dr (later Sir) James Young Simpson, pioneer of the use of chloroform in childbirth.
- 1860 Cunningham Grahame appointed Sheriff-Substitute of Argyllshire; family moves to Ardishaig, near Inverary.
- 1863 The family moves to Inverary.
- 1864 16 March: Roland Grahame born; 4 April: Bessie Grahame dies of scarlet fever. KG catches the infection; left with permanent susceptibility to bronchial complaints. Children move to their maternal grandmother's house, 'The Mount', Cookham Dean, Berkshire.
- 1866 Spring: Mrs Ingles and the children move to Fernhill Cottage, Cranbourne. Summer: children move back to Inverary to live with Cunningham Grahame.
- 1867 Cunningham Grahame moves to France, and the children return to Cranbourne.
- 1868–76 KG attends St Edward's School in Oxford.
- 1870 First Married Women's Property Act.
- 1871 Recognition of Trade Unions.
- 1874 31 December: KG's brother Willie dies (aged 16) of pulmonary inflammation.
- 1876 KG's uncle, John Grahame, does not let him attend Oxford University, ostensibly for financial reasons. KG becomes a clerk in his Uncle John's Westminster office, Grahame, Currie and Spens. Meets F. J. Furnivall; joins New Shakespere Society and London Scottish Volunteers.
- 1879 1 January: begins career in the Bank of England as 'gentleman-clerk' with distinction (and highest mark) in the entrance examination. Moves into lodgings in Bloomsbury Street (later shared with his brother Roland).
- 1880 Becomes honorary secretary of the New Shakespere Society (until 1891).
- 1882 An attempt is made to assassinate Queen Victoria. KG moves into a flat at 65 Chelsea Gardens, Chelsea Bridge Road.

- 1883 Karl Marx dies.
- 1884 Undertakes voluntary work at newly founded Toynbee Hall (continues through the 1880s). First holiday at The Lizard, Cornwall.
- 1885 Pall Mall Riots in London.
- 1886 First visit to Italy: stays at Villino Landau, near Florence.
- 1887 27 February: death of Cunningham Grahame in Le Havre. KG apparently indifferent to the death.
- 1888 Meets W. E. Henley. 26 December: first published work, 'By a Northern Furrow' in *St James's Gazette*.
- 1890 Visits Venice for the first time. Begins to contribute occasional papers to the *Scots Observer* (later the *National Observer*), *St James's Gazette*, and others.
- 1891 'The Olympians' published in the *National Observer*.
- 1893 *Pagan Papers*, reprints of essays plus six new stories, with frontispiece by Aubrey Beardsley, is published. Women are admitted to work in the Bank of England.
- 1894 July: first contribution to *The Yellow Book* ('The Roman Road'). His cousin, Anthony Hope [Hawkins], publishes *The Prisoner of Zenda*.
- 1895 *The Golden Age* published; review in the *Daily Chronicle* by Algernon Swinburne calls it 'well-nigh too praiseworthy for praise'. KG takes spring holiday in Alassio. The trial of Oscar Wilde.
- 1897 Meets Elspeth Thompson. *The Yellow Book* ceases publication. KG's brother Roland marries.
- 1898 Secretary of the Bank of England. December: *Dream Days* published.
- 1899 3 April: seriously ill with pneumonia and emphysema. June: visits Fowey for the first time and meets Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. 22 July: marries Elspeth at Fowey. Takes long lease on 16 Durham Villas, Campden Hill, London.
- 1900 January: British army defeated by Boers at Spion Kop. 12 May: Alastair Grahame born prematurely, with congenital cataract in his right eye, and a squint in his left. November: Oscar Wilde dies.
- 1901 22 January: death of Queen Victoria. September: Theodore Roosevelt becomes president of the USA.
- 1902 Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, and Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* published.

- 1903 24 November: George F. Robinson, 'deemed to be a lunatic [with] Socialistic views', shoots at KG at the Bank. The Motor Car Act raises the speed limit for cars from the 1896 limit of 14 mph to 20 mph. Women's Social and Political Union founded. W. E. Henley dies. December: first flight by Wright Brothers.
- 1904 KG tells Alastair first stories that will develop into parts of *The Wind in the Willows*. September: has to return from holiday in Spain because Alastair has peritonitis. First performance of *Peter Pan*.
- 1906 Moves to Mayfield, Cookham Dean.
- 1907 May–September: KG writes fifteen letters to Alastair, which form the basis for Chapters VIII and X–XII of *The Wind in the Willows*.
- 1908 June: resigns from the Bank of England, on grounds of ill health, on a pension of £400 per annum (RPI equivalent 2008, £31,000). 4 October, USA (Scribner's) edition of *The Wind in the Willows* published; 8 October, UK (Methuen) edition published.
- 1910 Moves to Boham's, Blewbury, near Didcot. Meets President Theodore Roosevelt at Oxford.
- 1911 9 September: Edward Atkinson ('Atky') drowns near Fowey.
- 1914 Alastair goes to Rugby School. Leaves after six weeks.
- 1915 January: Alastair goes to Eton; removed in 1916 because of 'emotional problems'.
- 1916 KG edits *Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children*.
- 1920 7 May: Alastair, now an undergraduate at Oxford, is killed by a train. October: KG and Elspeth leave England for Italy.
- 1924 Returns to England. Moves to Church Cottage, Pangbourne.
- 1929 KG's brother Roland dies (they had quarrelled over money in 1913).
- 1929 A. A. Milne's dramatization *Toad of Toad Hall* first produced (Liverpool Playhouse).
- 1931 E. H. Shepard illustrates *The Wind in the Willows*.
- 1932 6 July: dies of cerebral haemorrhage. 9 July, buried at St James the Less, Pangbourne; later transferred to Holywell Churchyard, Oxford. The inscription on the gravestone, by his cousin Anthony Hope [Hawkins], reads: 'To the beautiful memory of Kenneth Grahame, husband of Elspeth and father of Alastair, who passed the River on the 6th July 1932, leaving childhood and literature through him the more blest for all time.'
- 1933 Patrick R. Chalmers publishes *Kenneth Grahame: Life, Letters and Unpublished Work*, including the story 'Bertie's Escapade'.

- 1938 Elspeth agrees to sell film rights of *The Wind in the Willows* to Walt Disney for \$2,500. (Film produced as *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr Toad*, released 5 October 1949.)
- 1944 13 July: Elspeth publishes *First Whispers of 'The Wind in the Willows'*, including KG's letters to Alastair.
- 1946 19 December: Elspeth dies after a stroke.

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

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THE RIVER BANK

THE Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash; till he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms. Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth below and around him, penetrating even his dark and lowly little house with its spirit of divine discontent and longing. It was small wonder, then, that he suddenly flung down his brush on the floor, said 'Bother!' and 'O blow!' and also 'Hang spring-cleaning!' and bolted out of the house without even waiting to put on his coat.* Something up above was calling him imperiously, and he made for the steep little tunnel which answered in his case to the gravelled carriage-drive owned by animals whose residences are nearer to the sun and air. So he scraped and scratched and scabbled and scrooged, and then he scrooged again and scabbled and scratched and scraped, working busily with his little paws and muttering to himself, 'Up we go! Up we go!' till at last, pop! his snout came out into the sunlight, and he found himself rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow.

'This is fine!' he said to himself. 'This is better than whitewashing!' The sunshine struck hot on his fur, soft breezes caressed his heated brow,* and after the seclusion of the cellarage he had lived in so long the carol* of happy birds fell on his dulled hearing almost like a shout. Jumping off all his four legs at once, in the joy of living and the delight of spring without its cleaning, he pursued his way across the meadow till he reached the hedge on the further side.

'Hold up!' said an elderly rabbit at the gap. 'Sixpence for the privilege of passing by the private road!' He was bowled over in an instant by the impatient and contemptuous Mole, who trotted along the side of the hedge chaffing the other rabbits as they peeped hurriedly from their holes to see what the row was about. 'Onion-sauce! Onion-sauce!'* he remarked jeeringly, and was gone before they could think of a thoroughly satisfactory reply. Then they all started grumbling

at each other. 'How *stupid* you are! Why didn't you tell him—' 'Well, why didn't *you* say—' 'You might have reminded him—' and so on, in the usual way; but of course, it was then much too late, as is always the case.

It all seemed too good to be true. Hither and thither through the meadows he rambled busily, along the hedgerows, across the copses, finding everywhere birds building, flowers budding, leaves thrusting—everything happy, and progressive, and occupied. And instead of having an uneasy conscience pricking him and whispering 'Whitewash!' he somehow could only feel how jolly it was to be the only idle dog among all these busy citizens. After all, the best part of a holiday is perhaps not so much to be resting yourself, as to see all the other fellows busy working.

He thought his happiness was complete when, as he meandered aimlessly along, suddenly he stood by the edge of a full-fed river.* Never in his life had he seen a river before—this sleek, sinuous, full-bodied animal, chasing and chuckling, gripping things with a gurgle and leaving them with a laugh, to fling itself on fresh playmates that shook themselves free, and were caught and held again. All was a-shake and a-shiver—glints and gleams and sparkles, rustle and swirl, chatter and bubble. The Mole was bewitched, entranced, fascinated. By the side of the river he trotted as one trots, when very small, by the side of a man who holds one spellbound by exciting stories; and when tired at last, he sat on the bank, while the river still chattered on to him, a babbling procession of the best stories in the world, sent from the heart of the earth to be told at last to the insatiable sea.*

As he sat on the grass and looked across the river, a dark hole in the bank opposite, just above the water's edge, caught his eye, and dreamily he fell to considering what a nice snug dwelling-place it would make for an animal with few wants and fond of a bijou riverside residence, above flood-level and remote from noise and dust. As he gazed, something bright and small seemed to twinkle down in the heart of it, vanished, then twinkled once more like a tiny star. But it could hardly be a star in such an unlikely situation; and it was too glittering and small for a glow-worm. Then, as he looked, it winked at him, and so declared itself to be an eye; and a small face began gradually to grow up round it, like a frame round a picture.

A brown little face, with whiskers.

A grave round face, with the same twinkle in its eye that had first attracted his notice.

Small neat ears and thick silky hair.

It was the Water Rat!*

Then the two animals stood and regarded each other cautiously.

'Hullo, Mole!' said the Water Rat.

'Hullo, Rat!' said the Mole.

'Would you like to come over?' inquired the Rat presently.

'Oh, it's all very well to *talk*,' said the Mole, rather pettishly, he being new to a river and riverside life and its ways.

The Rat said nothing, but stooped and unfastened a rope and hauled on it; then lightly stepped into a little boat which the Mole had not observed. It was painted blue outside and white within, and was just the size for two animals; and the Mole's whole heart went out to it at once, even though he did not yet fully understand its uses.

The Rat sculled smartly* across and made fast. Then he held up his fore-paw as the Mole stepped gingerly down. 'Lean on that!' he said. 'Now then, step lively!' and the Mole to his surprise and rapture found himself actually seated in the stern of a real boat.

'This has been a wonderful day!' said he, as the Rat shoved off and took to the sculls again. 'Do you know, I've never been in a boat before in all my life.'

'What?' cried the Rat, open-mouthed: 'Never been in a—you never—well, I—what have you been doing, then?'

'Is it so nice as all that?' asked the Mole shyly, though he was quite prepared to believe it as he leant back in his seat and surveyed the cushions, the oars, the rowlocks, and all the fascinating fittings, and felt the boat sway lightly under him.

'Nice? It's the *only* thing,' said the Water Rat solemnly, as he leant forward for his stroke. 'Believe me, my young friend, there is *nothing*—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. Simply messing,' he went on dreamily: 'messing—about—in—boats; messing—'

'Look ahead, Rat!' cried the Mole suddenly.

It was too late. The boat struck the bank full tilt.* The dreamer, the joyous oarsman, lay on his back at the bottom of the boat, his heels in the air.

'—about in boats—or *with* boats,' the Rat went on composedly, picking himself up with a pleasant laugh. 'In or out of 'em, it doesn't matter.'

Nothing seems really to matter, that's the charm of it. Whether you get away, or whether you don't; whether you arrive at your destination or whether you reach somewhere else, or whether you never get anywhere at all, you're always busy, and you never do anything in particular; and when you've done it there's always something else to do, and you can do it if you like, but you'd much better not. Look here! If you've really nothing else on hand this morning, supposing we drop down the river together, and have a long day of it?*

The Mole waggled his toes from sheer happiness, spread his chest with a sigh of full contentment, and leaned back blissfully into the soft cushions. 'What a day I'm having!' he said. 'Let us start at once!'

'Hold hard a minute, then!' said the Rat. He looped the painter* through a ring in his landing-stage, climbed up into his hole above, and after a short interval reappeared staggering under a fat, wicker luncheon-basket.*

'Shove that under your feet,' he observed to the Mole, as he passed it down into the boat. Then he untied the painter and took the sculls again.

'What's inside it?' asked the Mole, wriggling with curiosity.

'There's cold chicken inside it,' replied the Rat briefly; 'cold-tonguecoldhamcoldbeefpickledgherkinssaladfrenchrollscresssand-widgespottedmeatgingerbeerlemonadesodawater—'

'O stop, stop,' cried the Mole in ecstasies: 'This is too much!'

'Do you really think so?' inquired the Rat seriously. 'It's only what I always take on these little excursions; and the other animals are always telling me that I'm a mean beast and cut it *very* fine!'

The Mole never heard a word he was saying. Absorbed in the new life he was entering upon, intoxicated with the sparkle, the ripple, the scents and the sounds and the sunlight, he trailed a paw in the water and dreamed long waking dreams. The Water Rat, like the good little fellow he was, sculled steadily on and forbore to disturb him.

'I like your clothes awfully, old chap,' he remarked after some half an hour or so had passed. 'I'm going to get a black velvet smoking-suit myself some day, as soon as I can afford it.'

'I beg your pardon,' said the Mole, pulling himself together with an effort. 'You must think me very rude; but all this is so new to me. So—this—is—a—River!'

'*The River*,' corrected the Rat.

'And you really live by the river? What a jolly life!'

‘By it and with it and on it and in it,’ said the Rat. ‘It’s brother and sister to me, and aunts, and company, and food and drink, and (naturally) washing. It’s my world, and I don’t want any other. What it hasn’t got is not worth having, and what it doesn’t know is not worth knowing.* Lord! the times we’ve had together! Whether in winter or summer, spring or autumn, it’s always got its fun and its excitements. When the floods are on in February, and my cellars and basement are brimming with drink that’s no good to me, and the brown water runs by my best bedroom window; or again when it all drops away and shows patches of mud that smells like plumcake, and the rushes and weed clog the channels, and I can potter about dry-shod over most of the bed of it and find fresh food to eat, and things careless people have dropped out of boats!’

‘But isn’t it a bit dull at times?’ the Mole ventured to ask. ‘Just you and the river, and no one else to pass a word with?’

‘No one else to—well, I mustn’t be hard on you,’ said the Rat with forbearance. ‘You’re new to it, and of course you don’t know. The bank is so crowded nowadays* that many people are moving away altogether: O no, it isn’t what it used to be, at all. Otters, kingfishers, dabchicks,* moorhens, all of them about all day long and always wanting you to *do* something—as if a fellow had no business of his own to attend to!’

‘What lies over *there*?’ asked the Mole, waving a paw towards a background of woodland that darkly framed the water-meadows on one side of the river.

‘That? O, that’s just the Wild Wood,*’ said the Rat shortly. ‘We don’t go there very much, we river-bankers.’

‘Aren’t they—aren’t they very *nice* people in there?’ said the Mole a trifle nervously.

‘W-e-ll,’ replied the Rat, ‘let me see. The squirrels are all right. *And* the rabbits—some of ’em, but rabbits are a mixed lot. And then there’s Badger, of course. He lives right in the heart of it; wouldn’t live anywhere else, either, if you paid him to do it. Dear old Badger! Nobody interferes with *him*. They’d better not,’ he added significantly.

‘Why, who *should* interfere with him?’ asked the Mole.

‘Well, of course—there—are others,’ explained the Rat in a hesitating sort of way. ‘Weasels—and stoats—and foxes—and so on. They’re all right in a way—I’m very good friends with them—pass the time of day when we meet, and all that—but they break out sometimes,

there's no denying it, and then—well, you can't really trust them, and that's the fact.'

The Mole knew well that it is quite against animal-etiquette to dwell on possible trouble ahead, or even to allude to it; so he dropped the subject.

'And beyond the Wild Wood again?' he asked: 'Where it's all blue and dim, and one sees what may be hills or perhaps they mayn't, and something like the smoke of towns, or is it only cloud-drift?'

'Beyond the Wild Wood comes the Wide World,' said the Rat. 'And that's something that doesn't matter, either to you or me. I've never been there, and I'm never going, nor you either, if you've got any sense at all. Don't ever refer to it again, please. Now then! Here's our backwater at last, where we're going to lunch.'

Leaving the main stream, they now passed into what seemed at first sight like a little landlocked lake. Green turf sloped down to either edge, brown snaky tree-roots gleamed below the surface of the quiet water, while ahead of them the silvery shoulder and foamy tumble of a weir, arm-in-arm with a restless dripping mill-wheel, that held up in its turn a grey-gabled mill-house, filled the air with a soothing murmur of sound,* dull and smothery, yet with little clear voices speaking up cheerfully out of it at intervals. It was so very beautiful that the Mole could only hold up both fore-paws and gasp, 'O my! O my! O my! O my!'

The Rat brought the boat alongside the bank, made her fast, helped the still awkward Mole safely ashore, and swung out the luncheon-basket. The Mole begged as a favour to be allowed to unpack it all by himself; and the Rat was very pleased to indulge him, and to sprawl at full length on the grass and rest, while his excited friend shook out the table-cloth and spread it, took out all the mysterious packets one by one and arranged their contents in due order, still gasping, 'O my! O my!' at each fresh revelation. When all was ready, the Rat said, 'Now, pitch in, old fellow!' and the Mole was indeed very glad to obey, for he had started his spring-cleaning at a very early hour that morning, as people *will* do, and had not paused for bite or sup; and he had been through a very great deal since that distant time which now seemed so many days ago.

'What are you looking at?' said the Rat presently, when the edge of their hunger was somewhat dulled, and the Mole's eyes were able to wander off the table-cloth a little.

'I am looking,' said the Mole, 'at a streak of bubbles that I see travelling along the surface of the water. That is a thing that strikes me as funny.'

'Bubbles? Oho!' said the Rat, and chirruped cheerily in an inviting sort of way.

A broad glistening muzzle showed itself above the edge of the bank, and the Otter hauled himself out and shook the water from his coat.

'Greedy beggars!' he observed, making for the provender. 'Why didn't you invite me, Ratty?'

'This was an impromptu affair,' explained the Rat. 'By the way—my friend Mr. Mole.'

'Proud, I'm sure,' said the Otter, and the two animals were friends forthwith.

'Such a rumpus everywhere!' continued the Otter. 'All the world seems out on the river to-day. I came up this backwater to try and get a moment's peace, and then stumble upon you fellows!—At least—I beg pardon—I don't exactly mean that, you know.'

There was a rustle behind them, proceeding from a hedge wherein last year's leaves still clung thick, and a stripy head, with high shoulders behind it, peered forth on them.

'Come on, old Badger!' shouted the Rat.

The Badger trotted forward a pace or two; then grunted, 'H'm! Company,' and turned his back and disappeared from view.

'That's *just* the sort of fellow he is!' observed the disappointed Rat. 'Simply hates Society! Now we shan't see any more of him to-day. Well, tell us *who's* out on the river?'

'Toad's out, for one,' replied the Otter. 'In his brand-new wagher-boat; new togs,* new everything!'

The two animals looked at each other and laughed.

'Once, it was nothing but sailing,' said the Rat. 'Then he tired of that and took to punting. Nothing would please him but to punt all day and every day, and a nice mess he made of it. Last year it was house-boating, and we all had to go and stay with him in his house-boat, and pretend we liked it. He was going to spend the rest of his life in a house-boat. It's all the same, whatever he takes up; he gets tired of it, and starts on something fresh.'

'Such a good fellow, too,' remarked the Otter reflectively: 'But no stability—especially in a boat!'

From where they sat they could get a glimpse of the main stream across the island that separated them; and just then a wager-boat* flashed into view, the rower—a short, stout figure—splashing badly and rolling a good deal, but working his hardest. The Rat stood up and hailed him, but Toad*—for it was he—shook his head and settled sternly to his work.

‘He’ll be out of the boat in a minute if he rolls like that,’ said the Rat, sitting down again.

‘Of course he will,’ chuckled the Otter. ‘Did I ever tell you that good story about Toad and the lock-keeper? It happened this way. Toad . . .’

An errant May-fly swerved unsteadily athwart the current in the intoxicated fashion affected by young bloods of May-flies seeing life. A swirl of water and a ‘cloop!’ and the May-fly was visible no more.*

Neither was the Otter.

The Mole looked down. The voice was still in his ears, but the turf whereon he had sprawled was clearly vacant. Not an Otter to be seen, as far as the distant horizon.

But again there was a streak of bubbles on the surface of the river.

The Rat hummed a tune, and the Mole recollected that animal-etiquette forbade any sort of comment on the sudden disappearance of one’s friends at any moment, for any reason or no reason whatever.

‘Well, well,’ said the Rat, ‘I suppose we ought to be moving. I wonder which of us had better pack the luncheon-basket?’ He did not speak as if he was frightfully eager for the treat.

‘O, please let me,’ said the Mole. So, of course, the Rat let him.

Packing the basket was not quite such pleasant work as unpacking the basket. It never is. But the Mole was bent on enjoying everything, and although just when he had got the basket packed and strapped up tightly he saw a plate staring up at him from the grass, and when the job had been done again the Rat pointed out a fork which anybody ought to have seen, and last of all, behold! the mustard pot,* which he had been sitting on without knowing it—still, somehow, the thing got finished at last, without much loss of temper.

The afternoon sun was getting low as the Rat sculled gently homewards in a dreamy mood, murmuring poetry-things over to himself, and not paying much attention to Mole. But the Mole was very full of lunch, and self-satisfaction, and pride, and already quite at home

in a boat (so he thought) and was getting a bit restless besides: and presently he said, 'Ratty! Please, I want to row, now!'

The Rat shook his head with a smile. 'Not yet, my young friend,' he said—'wait till you've had a few lessons. It's not so easy as it looks.'

The Mole was quiet for a minute or two. But he began to feel more and more jealous of Rat, sculling so strongly and so easily along, and his pride began to whisper that he could do it every bit as well. He jumped up and seized the sculls, so suddenly, that the Rat, who was gazing out over the water and saying more poetry-things to himself, was taken by surprise and fell backwards off his seat with his legs in the air for the second time, while the triumphant Mole took his place and grabbed the sculls with entire confidence.

'Stop it, you *silly* ass!' cried the Rat, from the bottom of the boat. 'You can't do it! You'll have us over!'

The Mole flung his sculls back with a flourish, and made a great dig at the water. He missed the surface altogether, his legs flew up above his head, and he found himself lying on the top of the prostrate Rat. Greatly alarmed, he made a grab at the side of the boat, and the next moment—Sploosh!

Over went the boat, and he found himself struggling in the river.

O my, how cold the water was, and O, how *very* wet it felt. How it sang in his ears as he went down, down, down! How bright and welcome the sun looked as he rose to the surface coughing and spluttering! How black was his despair when he felt himself sinking again! Then a firm paw gripped him by the back of his neck. It was the Rat, and he was evidently laughing—the Mole could *feel* him laughing, right down his arm and through his paw, and so into his—the Mole's—neck.

The Rat got hold of a scull and shoved it under the Mole's arm; then he did the same by the other side of him and, swimming behind, propelled the helpless animal to shore, hauled him out, and set him down on the bank, a squashy, pulpy lump of misery.

When the Rat had rubbed him down a bit, and wrung some of the wet out of him, he said, 'Now, then, old fellow! Trot up and down the towing-path as hard as you can, till you're warm and dry again, while I dive for the luncheon-basket.'

So the dismal Mole, wet without and ashamed within, trotted about till he was fairly dry, while the Rat plunged into the water again,

recovered the boat, righted her and made her fast, fetched his floating property to shore by degrees, and finally dived successfully for the luncheon-basket and struggled to land with it.

When all was ready for a start once more, the Mole, limp and dejected, took his seat in the stern of the boat; and as they set off, he said in a low voice, broken with emotion, 'Ratty, my generous friend! I am very sorry indeed for my foolish and ungrateful conduct. My heart quite fails me when I think how I might have lost that beautiful luncheon-basket. Indeed, I have been a complete ass, and I know it. Will you overlook it this once and forgive me, and let things go on as before?'

'That's all right, bless you!' responded the Rat cheerily. 'What's a little wet to a Water Rat? I'm more in the water than out of it most days. Don't you think any more about it; and, look here! I really think you had better come and stop with me for a little time. It's very plain and rough, you know—not like Toad's house at all—but you haven't seen that yet; still, I can make you comfortable. And I'll teach you to row, and to swim, and you'll soon be as handy on the water as any of us.'

The Mole was so touched by his kind manner of speaking that he could find no voice to answer him; and he had to brush away a tear or two with the back of his paw. But the Rat kindly looked in another direction, and presently the Mole's spirits revived again, and he was even able to give some straight back-talk to a couple of moorhens who were sniggering to each other about his bedraggled appearance.

When they got home, the Rat made a bright fire in the parlour, and planted the Mole in an arm-chair in front of it, having fetched down a dressing-gown and slippers for him, and told him river stories till supper-time. Very thrilling stories they were, too, to an earth-dwelling animal like Mole. Stories about weirs, and sudden floods, and leaping pike, and steamers that flung hard bottles—at least bottles were certainly flung, and *from* steamers, so presumably *by* them; and about herons, and how particular they were whom they spoke to; and about adventures down drains, and night-fishings with Otter, or excursions far afield with Badger. Supper was a most cheerful meal; but very shortly afterwards a terribly sleepy Mole had to be escorted upstairs by his considerate host, to the best bedroom, where he soon laid his head on his pillow in great peace and contentment, knowing that his new-found friend the River was lapping the sill of his window.

This day was only the first of many similar ones for the emancipated Mole, each of them longer and fuller of interest as the ripening summer moved onward. He learnt to swim and to row, and entered into the joy of running water; and with his ear to the reed-stems he caught, at intervals, something of what the wind went whispering so constantly among them.

II

THE OPEN ROAD*

‘RATTY,’ said the Mole suddenly, one bright summer morning, ‘if you please, I want to ask you a favour.’

The Rat was sitting on the river bank, singing a little song. He had just composed it himself, so he was very taken up with it, and would not pay proper attention to Mole or anything else. Since early morning he had been swimming in the river, in company with his friends the ducks. And when the ducks stood on their heads suddenly, as ducks will, he would dive down and tickle their necks, just under where their chins would be if ducks had chins, till they were forced to come to the surface again in a hurry, spluttering and angry and shaking their feathers at him, for it is impossible to say quite *all* you feel when your head is under water. At last they implored him to go away and attend to his own affairs and leave them to mind theirs. So the Rat went away, and sat on the river bank in the sun, and made up a song about them, which he called

‘DUCKS’ DITTY’

All along the backwater,
Through the rushes tall,
Ducks are a-dabbling,
Up tails all!*

Ducks’ tails, drakes’ tails,
Yellow feet a-quiver,
Yellow bills all out of sight
Busy in the river!

Slushy green undergrowth
Where the roach swim—
Here we keep our larder,
Cool and full and dim.

Every one for what he likes!
We like to be
Heads down, tails up,
Dabbling free!

High in the blue above
Swifts whirl and call—
We are down a-dabbling,
Up tails all!

‘I don’t know that I think so *very* much of that little song, Rat,’ observed the Mole cautiously. He was no poet himself and didn’t care who knew it; and he had a candid nature.

‘Nor don’t the ducks neither,’ replied the Rat cheerfully. ‘They say, “*Why* can’t fellows be allowed to do what they like *when* they like and *as* they like, instead of other fellows sitting on banks and watching them all the time and making remarks and poetry and things about them? What *nonsense* it all is!” That’s what the ducks say.’

‘So it is, so it is,’ said the Mole, with great heartiness.

‘No, it isn’t!’ cried the Rat indignantly.

‘Well then, it isn’t, it isn’t,’ replied the Mole soothingly. ‘But what I wanted to ask you was, won’t you take me to call on Mr. Toad? I’ve heard so much about him, and I do so want to make his acquaintance.’

‘Why, certainly,’ said the good-natured Rat, jumping to his feet and dismissing poetry from his mind for the day. ‘Get the boat out, and we’ll paddle up there at once. It’s never the wrong time to call on Toad. Early or late he’s always the same fellow. Always good-tempered, always glad to see you, always sorry when you go!’

‘He must be a very nice animal,’ observed the Mole, as he got into the boat and took the sculls, while the Rat settled himself comfortably in the stern.

‘He is indeed the best of animals,’ replied Rat. ‘So simple, so good-natured, and so affectionate. Perhaps he’s not very clever—we can’t all be geniuses; and it may be that he is both boastful and conceited. But he has got some great qualities, has Toady.’*

Rounding a bend in the river, they came in sight of a handsome, dignified old house of mellowed red brick, with well-kept lawns reaching down to the water’s edge.*

‘There’s Toad Hall,’ said the Rat; ‘and that creek on the left, where the notice-board says, “Private. No landing allowed”,* leads to his boat-house, where we’ll leave the boat. The stables are over there to the right. That’s the banqueting-hall you’re looking at now—very old, that is. Toad is rather rich, you know, and this is really one of the nicest houses in these parts, though we never admit as much to Toad.’

They glided up the creek, and the Mole shipped his sculls as they passed into the shadow of a large boat-house. Here they saw many handsome boats, slung from the cross-beams or hauled up on a slip, but none in the water; and the place had an unused and a deserted air.

The Rat looked around him. 'I understand,' said he. 'Boating is played out. He's tired of it, and done with it. I wonder what new fad he has taken up now? Come along and let's look him up. We shall hear all about it quite soon enough.'

They disembarked, and strolled across the gay flower-decked lawns in search of Toad, whom they presently happened upon resting in a wicker garden-chair, with a preoccupied expression of face, and a large map spread out on his knees.

'Hooray!' he cried, jumping up on seeing them, 'this is splendid! He shook the paws of both of them warmly, never waiting for an introduction to the Mole. 'How *kind* of you!' he went on, dancing round them. 'I was just going to send a boat down the river for you, Ratty, with strict orders that you were to be fetched up here at once, whatever you were doing. I want you badly—both of you. Now what will you take? Come inside and have something! You don't know how lucky it is, your turning up just now!'

'Let's sit quiet a bit, Toady!' said the Rat, throwing himself into an easy chair, while the Mole took another by the side of him and made some civil remark about Toad's 'delightful residence'.

'Finest house on the whole river,' cried Toad boisterously. 'Or anywhere else, for that matter,' he could not help adding.

Here the Rat nudged the Mole. Unfortunately the Toad saw him do it, and turned very red. There was a moment's painful silence. Then Toad burst out laughing. 'All right, Ratty,' he said. 'It's only my way, you know. And it's not such a very bad house, is it? You know you rather like it yourself. Now, look here. Let's be sensible. You are the very animals I wanted. You've got to help me. It's most important!'

'It's about your rowing, I suppose,' said the Rat, with an innocent air. 'You're getting on fairly well, though you splash a good bit still. With a great deal of patience, and any quantity of coaching, you may—'

'O, pooh! boating!' interrupted the Toad, in great disgust. 'Silly boyish amusement. I've given that up *long* ago. Sheer waste of time, that's what it is. It makes me downright sorry to see you fellows, who ought to know better, spending all your energies in that aimless manner.'

No, I've discovered the real thing, the only genuine occupation for a lifetime. I propose to devote the remainder of mine to it, and can only regret the wasted years that lie behind me, squandered in trivialities. Come with me, dear Ratty, and your amiable friend also, if he will be so very good, just as far as the stable-yard, and you shall see what you shall see!

He led the way to the stable-yard accordingly, the Rat following with a most mistrustful expression; and there, drawn out of the coach-house into the open, they saw a gipsy caravan, shining with newness, painted a canary-yellow picked out with green, and red wheels.*

'There you are!' cried the Toad, straddling and expanding himself. 'There's real life for you, embodied in that little cart. The open road, the dusty highway, the heath, the common, the hedgerows, the rolling downs! Camps, villages, towns, cities! Here to-day, up and off to somewhere else to-morrow! Travel, change, interest, excitement! The whole world before you, and a horizon that's always changing! And mind, this is the very finest cart of its sort that was ever built, without any exception. Come inside and look at the arrangements. Planned 'em all myself, I did!'

The Mole was tremendously interested and excited, and followed him eagerly up the steps and into the interior of the caravan. The Rat only snorted and thrust his hands deep into his pockets, remaining where he was.

It was indeed very compact and comfortable. Little sleeping-bunks—a little table that folded up against the wall—a cooking-stove, lockers, bookshelves, a bird cage with a bird in it; and pots, pans, jugs and kettles of every size and variety.

'All complete!' said the Toad triumphantly, pulling open a locker. 'You see—biscuits, potted lobster, sardines—everything you can possibly want. Soda-water here—baccy there—letter-paper, bacon, jam, cards and dominoes—you'll find,' he continued, as they descended the steps again, 'you'll find that nothing whatever has been forgotten,* when we make our start this afternoon.'

'I beg your pardon,' said the Rat slowly, as he chewed a straw, 'but did I overhear you say something about "*we*", and "*start*", and "*this afternoon*"?'

'Now, you dear good old Ratty,' said Toad imploringly, 'don't begin talking in that stiff and sniffy sort of way, because you know you've *got* to come. I can't possibly manage without you, so please consider

it settled, and don't argue—it's the one thing I can't stand. You surely don't mean to stick to your dull fusty old river all your life, and just live in a hole in a bank, and *boat*? I want to show you the world! I'm going to make an *animal* of you, my boy!

'I don't care,' said the Rat doggedly. 'I'm not coming, and that's flat. And I *am* going to stick to my old river, *and* live in a hole, *and* boat, as I've always done. And what's more, Mole's going to stick to me and do as I do, aren't you, Mole?'

'Of course I am,' said the Mole loyally. 'I'll always stick to you, Rat, and what you say is to be—has got to be. All the same, it sounds as if it might have been—well, rather fun, you know!' he added wistfully. Poor Mole! The Life Adventurous was so new a thing to him and so thrilling; and this fresh aspect of it was so tempting; and he had fallen in love at first sight with the canary-coloured cart and all its little fitments.

The Rat saw what was passing in his mind, and wavered. He hated disappointing people, and he was fond of the Mole, and would do almost anything to oblige him. Toad was watching both of them closely.

'Come along in and have some lunch,' he said diplomatically, 'and we'll talk it over. We needn't decide anything in a hurry. Of course, I don't really care. I only want to give pleasure to you fellows. "Live for others!" That's my motto in life.'

During luncheon—which was excellent, of course, as everything at Toad Hall always was—the Toad simply let himself go. Disregarding the Rat, he proceeded to play upon the inexperienced Mole as on a harp. Naturally a voluble animal, and always mastered by his imagination, he painted the prospects of the trip and the joys of the open life and the road-side in such glowing colours that the Mole could hardly sit in his chair for excitement. Somehow, it soon seemed taken for granted by all three of them that the trip was a settled thing; and the Rat, though still unconvinced in his mind, allowed his good nature to over-ride his personal objections. He could not bear to disappoint his two friends, who were already deep in schemes and anticipations, planning out each day's separate occupation for several weeks ahead.

When they were quite ready, the now triumphant Toad led his companions to the paddock and set them to capture the old grey horse, who, without having been consulted, and to his own extreme annoyance, had been told off by Toad for the dustiest job in this dusty expedition.

He frankly preferred the paddock, and took a deal of catching. Meantime Toad packed the lockers still tighter with necessaries, and hung nose-bags, nets of onions, bundles of hay, and baskets from the bottom of the cart. At last the horse was caught and harnessed, and they set off, all talking at once, each animal either trudging by the side of the cart or sitting on the shaft, as the humour took him. It was a golden afternoon. The smell of the dust they kicked up was rich and satisfying; out of thick orchards on either side the road, birds called and whistled to them cheerily; good-natured wayfarers, passing them, gave them 'Good day', or stopped to say nice things about their beautiful cart; and rabbits, sitting at their front doors in the hedgerows, held up their fore-paws, and said, 'O my! O my! O my!'

Late in the evening, tired and happy and miles from home, they drew up on a remote common far from habitations, turned the horse loose to graze, and ate their simple supper sitting on the grass by the side of the cart. Toad talked big about all he was going to do in the days to come, while stars grew fuller and larger all around them, and a yellow moon, appearing suddenly and silently from nowhere in particular, came to keep them company and listen to their talk. At last they turned into their little bunks in the cart; and Toad, kicking out his legs, sleepily said, 'Well, good night, you fellows! This is the real life for a gentleman! Talk about your old river!'

'I *don't* talk about my river,' replied the patient Rat. 'You *know* I don't, Toad. But I *think* about it,' he added pathetically, in a lower tone: 'I think about it—all the time!'

The Mole reached out from under his blanket, felt for the Rat's paw in the darkness, and gave it a squeeze. 'I'll do whatever you like, Ratty,' he whispered. 'Shall we run away tomorrow morning, quite early—*very* early—and go back to our dear old hole on the river?'

'No, no, we'll see it out,' whispered back the Rat. 'Thanks awfully, but I ought to stick by Toad till this trip is ended. It wouldn't be safe for him to be left to himself. It won't take very long. His fads never do. Good night!'

The end was indeed nearer than even the Rat suspected.

After so much open air and excitement the Toad slept very soundly, and no amount of shaking could rouse him out of bed next morning. So the Mole and Rat turned to, quietly and manfully, and while the Rat saw to the horse, and lit a fire, and cleaned last night's cups and platters, and got things ready for breakfast, the Mole truded off to

the nearest village, a long way off, for milk and eggs and various necessaries the Toad had, of course, forgotten to provide. The hard work had all been done, and the two animals were resting, thoroughly exhausted, by the time Toad appeared on the scene, fresh and gay, remarking what a pleasant easy life it was they were all leading now, after the cares and worries and fatigues of house-keeping at home.

They had a pleasant ramble that day over grassy downs and along narrow by-lanes, and camped, as before, on a common, only this time the two guests took care that Toad should do his fair share of work. In consequence, when the time came for starting next morning, Toad was by no means so rapturous about the simplicity of the primitive life, and indeed attempted to resume his place in his bunk, whence he was hauled by force. Their way lay, as before, across country by narrow lanes, and it was not till the afternoon that they came out on the high road, their first high road; and there disaster, fleet and unforeseen, sprang out on them—disaster momentous indeed to their expedition, but simply overwhelming in its effect on the after-career of Toad.

They were strolling along the high road easily, the Mole by the horse's head, talking to him, since the horse had complained that he was being frightfully left out of it,* and nobody considered him in the least; the Toad and the Water Rat walking behind the cart talking together—at least Toad was talking, and Rat was saying at intervals, 'Yes, precisely; and what did *you* say to *him*?'—and thinking all the time of something very different, when far behind them they heard a faint warning hum, like the drone of a distant bee. Glancing back, they saw a small cloud of dust, with a dark centre of energy, advancing on them at incredible speed,* while from out the dust a faint 'Poop-poop!' wailed like an uneasy animal in pain. Hardly regarding it, they turned to resume their conversation, when in an instant (as it seemed) the peaceful scene was changed, and with a blast of wind and a whirl of sound that made them jump for the nearest ditch, it was on them! The 'poop-poop' rang with a brazen shout in their ears, they had a moment's glimpse of an interior of glittering plate-glass and rich morocco, and the magnificent motor-car, immense, breath-snatching, passionate, with its pilot tense and hugging his wheel, possessed all earth and air for the fraction of a second, flung an enveloping cloud of dust that blinded and enwrapped them utterly, and then dwindled to a speck in the far distance, changed back into a droning bee once more.*

The old grey horse, dreaming, as he plodded along, of his quiet paddock, in a new raw situation such as this simply abandoned himself to his natural emotions. Rearing, plunging, backing steadily, in spite of all the Mole's efforts at his head, and all the Mole's lively language directed at his better feelings, he drove the cart backwards towards the deep ditch at the side of the road. It wavered an instant—then there was a heartrending crash—and the canary-coloured cart, their pride and their joy, lay on its side in the ditch, an irredeemable wreck.

The Rat danced up and down in the road, simply transported with passion. 'You villains!' he shouted, shaking both fists, 'You scoundrels, you highwaymen, you—you—road-hogs!*—I'll have the law of you! I'll report you! I'll take you through all the Courts!' His homesickness had quite slipped away from him, and for the moment he was the skipper of the canary-coloured vessel driven on a shoal by the reckless jockeying of rival mariners, and he was trying to recollect all the fine and biting things he used to say to masters of steam-launches when their wash, as they drove too near the bank, used to flood his parlour carpet at home.

Toad sat straight down in the middle of the dusty road, his legs stretched out before him, and stared fixedly in the direction of the disappearing motor-car. He breathed short, his face wore a placid, satisfied expression, and at intervals he faintly murmured 'Poop-poop!'

The Mole was busy trying to quiet the horse, which he succeeded in doing after a time. Then he went to look at the cart, on its side in the ditch. It was indeed a sorry sight. Panels and windows smashed, axles hopelessly bent, one wheel off, sardines scattered over the wide world, and the bird in the bird-cage sobbing pitifully and calling to be let out.

The Rat came to help him, but their united efforts were not sufficient to right the cart. 'Hi! Toad!' they cried. 'Come and bear a hand, can't you!'

The Toad never answered a word, or budged from his seat in the road; so they went to see what was the matter with him. They found him in a sort of trance, a happy smile on his face, his eyes still fixed on the dusty wake of their destroyer. At intervals he was still heard to murmur 'Poop-poop!'

The Rat shook him by the shoulder. 'Are you coming to help us, Toad?' he demanded sternly.

‘Glorious, stirring sight!’ murmured Toad, never offering to move. ‘The poetry of motion! The *real* way to travel! The *only* way to travel! Here to-day—in next week to-morrow! Villages skipped, towns and cities jumped—always somebody else’s horizon! O bliss! O poop-poop! O my! O my!’

‘O *stop* being an ass, Toad!’ cried the Mole despairingly.

‘And to think I never *knew*!’ went on the Toad in a dreamy monotone. ‘All those wasted years that lie behind me, I never knew, never even *dreamt*! But *now*—but now that I know, now that I fully realise! O what a flowery track* lies spread before me, henceforth! What dust-clouds shall spring up behind me as I speed on my reckless way! What carts I shall fling carelessly into the ditch in the wake of my magnificent onset! Horrid little carts—common carts—canary-coloured carts!’

‘What are we to do with him?’ asked the Mole of the Water Rat.

‘Nothing at all,’ replied the Rat firmly. ‘Because there is really nothing to be done. You see, I know him from old. He is now possessed. He has got a new craze, and it always takes him that way, in its first stage. He’ll continue like that for days now, like an animal walking in a happy dream, quite useless for all practical purposes. Never mind him. Let’s go and see what there is to be done about the cart.’

A careful inspection showed them that, even if they succeeded in righting it by themselves, the cart would travel no longer. The axles were in a hopeless state, and the missing wheel was shattered into pieces.

The Rat knotted the horse’s reins over his back and took him by the head, carrying the bird-cage and its hysterical occupant in the other hand. ‘Come on!’ he said grimly to the Mole. ‘It’s five or six miles to the nearest town, and we shall just have to walk it. The sooner we make a start the better.’

‘But what about Toad?’ asked the Mole anxiously, as they set off together. ‘We can’t leave him here, sitting in the middle of the road by himself, in the distracted state he’s in! It’s not safe. Supposing another Thing were to come along?’

‘O, *bother* Toad,’ said the Rat savagely; ‘I’ve done with him!’

They had not proceeded very far on their way, however, when there was a pattering of feet behind them, and Toad caught them up and

thrust a paw inside the elbow of each of them; still breathing short and staring into vacancy.

'Now, look here, Toad!' said the Rat sharply: 'as soon as we get to the town, you'll have to go straight to the police-station, and see if they know anything about that motor-car and who it belongs to, and lodge a complaint against it. And then you'll have to go to a blacksmith's or a wheelwright's and arrange for the cart to be fetched and mended and put to rights. It'll take time, but it's not quite a hopeless smash. Meanwhile, the Mole and I will go to an inn and find comfortable rooms where we can stay till the cart's ready, and till your nerves have recovered from their shock.'

'Police-station! Complaint!' murmured Toad dreamily. 'Me *complain* of that beautiful, that heavenly vision that has been vouchsafed me! *Mend* the *cart*! I've done with carts for ever. I never want to see the cart, or to hear of it, again. O Ratty! You can't think how obliged I am to you for consenting to come on this trip! I wouldn't have gone without you, and then I might never have seen that—that swan, that sunbeam, that thunderbolt!* I might never have heard that entrancing sound, or smelt that bewitching smell! I owe it all to you, my best of friends!'

The Rat turned from him in despair. 'You see what it is?' he said to the Mole, addressing him across Toad's head: 'He's quite hopeless. I give it up—when we get to the town we'll go to the railway station, and with luck we may pick up a train there that'll get us back to River Bank to-night. And if ever you catch me going a-pleasuring with this provoking animal again!'—He snorted, and during the rest of that weary trudge addressed his remarks exclusively to Mole.

On reaching the town they went straight to the station and deposited Toad in the second-class waiting-room, giving a porter twopence to keep a strict eye on him. They then left the horse at an inn stable, and gave what directions they could about the cart and its contents. Eventually, a slow train having landed them at a station not very far from Toad Hall, they escorted the spellbound, sleep-walking Toad to his door, put him inside it, and instructed his housekeeper to feed him, undress him, and put him to bed. Then they got out their boat from the boat-house, sculled down the river home, and at a very late hour sat down to supper in their own cosy riverside parlour, to the Rat's great joy and contentment.

The following evening the Mole, who had risen late and taken things very easy all day, was sitting on the bank fishing, when the Rat, who had been looking up his friends and gossiping, came strolling along to find him. 'Heard the news?' he said. 'There's nothing else being talked about, all along the river bank. Toad went up to Town by an early train this morning. And he has ordered a large and very expensive motor-car.'*

THE WILD WOOD

THE Mole had long wanted to make the acquaintance of the Badger. He seemed, by all accounts, to be such an important personage and, though rarely visible, to make his unseen influence felt by everybody about the place. But whenever the Mole mentioned his wish to the Water Rat he always found himself put off. 'It's all right,' the Rat would say. 'Badger'll turn up some day or other—he's always turning up—and then I'll introduce you. The best of fellows! But you must not only take him *as* you find him, but *when* you find him.'

'Couldn't you ask him here—dinner or something?' said the Mole.

'He wouldn't come,' replied the Rat simply. 'Badger hates Society, and invitations, and dinner, and all that sort of thing.'

'Well, then, supposing we go and call on *him*?' suggested the Mole.

'O, I'm sure he wouldn't like that at *all*,' said the Rat, quite alarmed. 'He's so very shy, he'd be sure to be offended. I've never even ventured to call on him at his own home myself, though I know him so well. Besides, we can't. It's quite out of the question, because he lives in the very middle of the Wild Wood.'

'Well, supposing he does,' said the Mole. 'You told me the Wild Wood was all right, you know.'

'O, I know, I know, so it is,' replied the Rat evasively. 'But I think we won't go there just now. Not *just* yet. It's a long way, and he wouldn't be at home at this time of year anyhow, and he'll be coming along some day, if you'll wait quietly.'

The Mole had to be content with this. But the Badger never came along, and every day brought its amusements, and it was not till summer was long over, and cold and frost and miry ways kept them much indoors, and the swollen river raced past outside their windows with a speed that mocked at boating of any sort or kind, that he found his thoughts dwelling again with much persistence on the solitary grey Badger, who lived his own life by himself, in his hole in the middle of the Wild Wood.

In the winter time the Rat slept a great deal, retiring early and rising late. During his short day he sometimes scribbled poetry or did

other small domestic jobs about the house; and, of course, there were always animals dropping in for a chat, and consequently there was a good deal of story-telling and comparing notes on the past summer and all its doings.

Such a rich chapter it had been, when one came to look back on it all! With illustrations so numerous and so very highly coloured! The pageant of the river bank had marched steadily along, unfolding itself in scene-pictures that succeeded each other in stately procession. Purple loosestrife arrived early, shaking luxuriant tangled locks along the edge of the mirror whence its own face laughed back at it. Willow-herb, tender and wistful, like a pink sunset cloud, was not slow to follow. Comfrey, the purple hand-in-hand with the white, crept forth to take its place in the line; and at last one morning the diffident and delaying dog-rose stepped delicately on the stage, and one knew, as if string-music had announced it in stately chords that strayed into a gavotte,* that June at last was here. One member of the company was still awaited; the shepherd-boy for the nymphs to woo, the knight for whom the ladies waited at the window, the prince that was to kiss the sleeping summer back to life and love. But when meadow-sweet, debonair and odorous in amber jerkin, moved graciously to his place in the group, then the play was ready to begin.*

And what a play it had been! Drowsy animals, snug in their holes while wind and rain were battering at their doors, recalled still keen mornings, an hour before sunrise, when the white mist, as yet undispersed, clung closely along the surface of the water; then the shock of the early plunge, the scamper along the bank, and the radiant transformation of earth, air, and water, when suddenly the sun was with them again, and grey was gold and colour was born and sprang out of the earth once more. They recalled the languorous siesta of hot mid-day, deep in green undergrowth, the sun striking through in tiny golden shafts and spots; the boating and bathing of the afternoon, the rambles along dusty lanes and through yellow cornfields; and the long cool evening at last, when so many threads were gathered up, so many friendships rounded, and so many adventures planned for the morrow. There was plenty to talk about on those short winter days when the animals found themselves round the fire; still, the Mole had a good deal of spare time* on his hands, and so one afternoon, when the Rat in his arm-chair before the blaze was alternately dozing and trying over rhymes that wouldn't fit, he formed the resolution to go out

by himself and explore the Wild Wood, and perhaps strike up an acquaintance with Mr. Badger.

It was a cold still afternoon with a hard steely sky overhead, when he slipped out of the warm parlour into the open air. The country lay bare and entirely leafless around him, and he thought that he had never seen so far and so intimately into the insides of things as on that winter day when Nature was deep in her annual slumber and seemed to have kicked the clothes off. Copses, dells, quarries and all hidden places, which had been mysterious mines for exploration in leafy summer, now exposed themselves and their secrets pathetically, and seemed to ask him to overlook their shabby poverty for a while, till they could riot in rich masquerade as before, and trick and entice him with the old deceptions. It was pitiful in a way, and yet cheering—even exhilarating. He was glad that he liked the country undecorated, hard, and stripped of its finery. He had got down to the bare bones of it, and they were fine and strong and simple. He did not want the warm clover and the play of seeding grasses; the screens of quickset,* the billowy drapery of beech and elm seemed best away; and with great cheerfulness of spirit he pushed on towards the Wild Wood, which lay before him low and threatening, like a black reef in some still southern sea.

There was nothing to alarm him at first entry. Twigs crackled under his feet, logs tripped him, funguses on stumps resembled caricatures, and startled him for the moment by their likeness to something familiar and far away; but that was all fun, and exciting. It led him on, and he penetrated to where the light was less, and trees crouched nearer and nearer, and holes made ugly mouths at him on either side.

Everything was very still now. The dusk advanced on him steadily, rapidly, gathering in behind and before; and the light seemed to be draining away like flood-water.

Then the faces began.

It was over his shoulder, and indistinctly, that he first thought he saw a face: a little evil wedge-shaped face, looking out at him from a hole.* When he turned and confronted it, the thing had vanished.

He quickened his pace, telling himself cheerfully not to begin imagining things, or there would be simply no end to it. He passed another hole, and another, and another; and then—yes!—no!—yes! certainly a little narrow face, with hard eyes, had flashed up for an instant from a hole, and was gone. He hesitated—braced himself up

for an effort and strode on. Then suddenly, and as if it had been so all the time, every hole, far and near, and there were hundreds of them, seemed to possess its face, coming and going rapidly, all fixing on him glances of malice and hatred: all hard-eyed and evil and sharp.

If he could only get away from the holes in the banks, he thought, there would be no more faces. He swung off the path and plunged into the untrodden places of the wood.

Then the whistling began.

Very faint and shrill it was, and far behind him, when first he heard it; but somehow it made him hurry forward. Then, still very faint and shrill, it sounded far ahead of him, and made him hesitate and want to go back. As he halted in indecision it broke out on either side, and seemed to be caught up and passed on throughout the whole length of the wood to its furthest limit. They were up and alert and ready, evidently, whoever they were! And he—he was alone, and unarmed, and far from any help; and the night was closing in.

Then the pattering began.

He thought it was only falling leaves at first, so slight and delicate was the sound of it. Then as it grew it took a regular rhythm, and he knew it for nothing else but the pat-pat-pat of little feet, still a very long way off. Was it in front or behind? It seemed to be first one, then the other, then both. It grew and it multiplied, till from every quarter as he listened anxiously, leaning this way and that, it seemed to be closing in on him. As he stood still to hearken, a rabbit came running hard towards him through the trees. He waited, expecting it to slacken pace, or to swerve from him into a different course. Instead, the animal almost brushed him as it dashed past, his face set and hard, his eyes staring. 'Get out of this, you fool, get out!' the Mole heard him mutter as he swung round a stump and disappeared down a friendly burrow.

The pattering increased till it sounded like sudden hail on the dry-leaf carpet spread around him. The whole wood seemed running now, running hard, hunting, chasing, closing in round something or—somebody? In panic, he began to run too, aimlessly, he knew not whither. He ran up against things, he fell over things and into things, he darted under things and dodged round things. At last he took refuge in the dark deep hollow of an old beech tree, which offered shelter, concealment—perhaps even safety, but who could tell? Anyhow, he was too tired to run any further, and could only snuggle down into the dry leaves which had drifted into the hollow and hope he was safe

for the time. And as he lay there panting and trembling, and listened to the whistlings and the patterings outside, he knew it at last, in all its fullness, that dread thing which other little dwellers in field and hedgerow had encountered here, and known as their darkest moment—that thing which the Rat had vainly tried to shield him from—the Terror of the Wild Wood!

Meantime the Rat, warm and comfortable, dozed by his fireside. His paper of half-finished verses slipped from his knee, his head fell back, his mouth opened, and he wandered by the verdant banks of dream-rivers. Then a coal slipped, the fire crackled and sent up a spurt of flame, and he woke with a start. Remembering what he had been engaged upon, he reached down to the floor for his verses, pored over them for a minute, and then looked round for the Mole to ask him if he knew a good rhyme for something or other.

But the Mole was not there.

He listened for a time. The house seemed very quiet.

Then he called 'Moly!' several times, and, receiving no answer, got up and went out into the hall.

The Mole's cap was missing from its accustomed peg. His goloshes, which always lay by the umbrella-stand, were also gone.

The Rat left the house and carefully examined the muddy surface of the ground outside, hoping to find the Mole's tracks. There they were, sure enough. The goloshes were new, just bought for the winter, and the pimples on their soles were fresh and sharp. He could see the imprints of them in the mud, running along straight and purposeful, leading direct to the Wild Wood.

The Rat looked very grave, and stood in deep thought for a minute or two. Then he re-entered the house, strapped a belt round his waist, shoved a brace of pistols into it, took up a stout cudgel that stood in a corner of the hall, and set off for the Wild Wood at a smart pace.

It was already getting towards dusk when he reached the first fringe of trees and plunged without hesitation into the wood, looking anxiously on either side for any sign of his friend. Here and there wicked little faces popped out of holes, but vanished immediately at sight of the valorous animal, his pistols, and the great ugly cudgel in his grasp; and the whistling and pattering, which he had heard quite plainly on his first entry, died away and ceased, and all was very still. He made his way manfully through the length of the wood, to its furthest edge; then, forsaking all paths, he set himself to traverse it, laboriously

working over the whole ground, and all the time calling out cheerfully, 'Moly, Moly, Moly! Where are you? It's me—it's old Rat!'

He had patiently hunted through the wood for an hour or more, when at last to his joy he heard a little answering cry. Guiding himself by the sound, he made his way through the gathering darkness to the foot of an old beech tree, with a hole in it, and from out of the hole came a feeble voice, saying, 'Ratty! Is that really you?'

The Rat crept into the hollow, and there he found the Mole, exhausted and still trembling. 'O, Rat!' he cried, 'I've been so frightened, you can't think!'

'O, I quite understand,' said the Rat soothingly. 'You shouldn't really have gone and done it, Mole. I did my best to keep you from it. We river-bankers, we hardly ever come here by ourselves. If we have to come, we come in couples, at least; then we're generally all right. Besides, there are a hundred things one has to know, which we understand all about and you don't, as yet. I mean pass-words, and signs, and sayings which have power and effect, and plants you can carry in your pocket, and verses you repeat, and dodges and tricks you practise; all simple enough when you know them, but they've got to be known if you're small, or you'll find yourself in trouble. Of course if you were Badger or Otter, it would be quite another matter.'

'Surely the brave Mr. Toad wouldn't mind coming here by himself, would he?' inquired the Mole.

'Old Toad?' said the Rat, laughing heartily. 'He wouldn't show his face here alone, not for a whole hatful of golden guineas,* Toad wouldn't.'

The Mole was greatly cheered by the sound of the Rat's careless laughter, as well as by the sight of his stick and his gleaming pistols, and he stopped shivering and began to feel bolder and more himself again.

'Now then,' said the Rat presently, 'we really must pull ourselves together and make a start for home while there's still a little light left. It will never do to spend the night here, you understand. Too cold, for one thing.'

'Dear Ratty,' said the poor Mole, 'I'm dreadfully sorry, but I'm simply dead beat and that's a solid fact. You *must* let me rest here a while longer, and get my strength back, if I'm to get home at all.'

'O, all right,' said the good-natured Rat, 'rest away. It's pretty nearly pitch dark now, anyhow; and there ought to be a bit of a moon later.'

So the Mole got well into the dry leaves and stretched himself out, and presently dropped off into sleep, though of a broken and troubled sort; while the Rat covered himself up, too, as best he might, for warmth, and lay patiently waiting, with a pistol in his paw.

When at last the Mole woke up, much refreshed and in his usual spirits, the Rat said, 'Now then! I'll just take a look outside and see if everything's quiet, and then we really must be off.'

He went to the entrance of their retreat and put his head out. Then the Mole heard him saying quietly to himself, 'Hullo! hullo! here—is—a—go!'

'What's up, Ratty?' asked the Mole.

'*Snow* is up,' replied the Rat briefly; 'or rather, *down*. It's snowing hard.'

The Mole came and crouched beside him, and, looking out, saw the wood that had been so dreadful to him in quite a changed aspect. Holes, hollows, pools, pitfalls, and other black menaces to the wayfarer were vanishing fast, and a gleaming carpet of faery was springing up everywhere, that looked too delicate to be trodden upon by rough feet. A fine powder filled the air and caressed the cheek with a tingle in its touch, and the black boles of the trees showed up in a light that seemed to come from below.

'Well, well, it can't be helped,' said the Rat, after pondering. 'We must make a start, and take our chance, I suppose. The worst of it is, I don't exactly know where we are. And now this snow makes everything look so very different.'

It did indeed. The Mole would not have known that it was the same wood. However, they set out bravely, and took the line that seemed most promising, holding on to each other and pretending with invincible cheerfulness that they recognised an old friend in every fresh tree that grimly and silently greeted them, or saw openings, gaps, or paths with a familiar turn in them, in the monotony of white space and black tree-trunks that refused to vary.

An hour or two later—they had lost all count of time—they pulled up, dispirited, weary, and hopelessly at sea, and sat down on a fallen tree-trunk to recover their breath and consider what was to be done. They were aching with fatigue and bruised with tumbles; they had fallen into several holes and got wet through; the snow was getting so deep that they could hardly drag their little legs through it, and the trees were thicker and more like each other than ever. There seemed

to be no end to this wood, and no beginning, and no difference in it, and, worst of all, no way out.

‘We can’t sit here very long,’ said the Rat. ‘We shall have to make another push for it, and do something or other. The cold is too awful for anything, and the snow will soon be too deep for us to wade through.’ He peered about him and considered. ‘Look here,’ he went on, ‘this is what occurs to me. There’s a sort of dell down there in front of us, where the ground seems all hilly and humpy and hummocky. We’ll make our way down into that, and try and find some sort of shelter, a cave or hole with a dry floor to it, out of the snow and the wind, and there we’ll have a good rest before we try again, for we’re both of us pretty dead beat. Besides, the snow may leave off, or something may turn up.’

So once more they got on their feet, and struggled down into the dell, where they hunted about for a cave or some corner that was dry and a protection from the keen wind and the whirling snow. They were investigating one of the hummocky bits the Rat had spoken of, when suddenly the Mole tripped up and fell forward on his face with a squeal.

‘O, my leg!’ he cried. ‘O, my poor shin!’ and he sat up on the snow and nursed his leg in both his front paws.

‘Poor old Mole!’ said the Rat kindly. ‘You don’t seem to be having much luck to-day, do you? Let’s have a look at the leg. Yes,’ he went on, going down on his knees to look, ‘you’ve cut your shin, sure enough. Wait till I get at my handkerchief, and I’ll tie it up for you.’

‘I must have tripped over a hidden branch or a stump,’ said the Mole miserably. ‘O my! O my!’

‘It’s a very clean cut,’ said the Rat, examining it again attentively. ‘That was never done by a branch or a stump. Looks as if it was made by a sharp edge of something in metal. Funny!’ He pondered awhile, and examined the humps and slopes that surrounded them.

‘Well, never mind what done it,’ said the Mole, forgetting his grammar in his pain. ‘It hurts just the same, whatever done it.’

But the Rat, after carefully tying up the leg with his handkerchief, had left him and was busy scraping in the snow. He scratched and shovelled and explored, all four legs working busily, while the Mole waited impatiently, remarking at intervals, ‘O, *come* on, Rat!’

Suddenly the Rat cried ‘Hooray!’ and then ‘Hooray-oo-ray-oo-ray-oo-ray!’ and fell to executing a feeble jig in the snow.

'What *have* you found, Ratty?' asked the Mole, still nursing his leg.

'Come and see!' said the delighted Rat, as he jiggled on.

The Mole hobbled up to the spot and had a good look.

'Well,' he said at last, slowly, 'I *see* it right enough. Seen the same sort of thing before, lots of times. Familiar object, I call it. A door-scraper! Well, what of it? Why dance jigs round a door-scraper?'

'But don't you see what it *means*, you—you dull-witted animal?' cried the Rat impatiently.

'Of course I see what it means,' replied the Mole. 'It simply means that some *very* careless and forgetful person has left his door-scraper lying about in the middle of the Wild Wood, *just* where it's *sure* to trip *everybody* up. Very thoughtless of him, I call it. When I get home I shall go and complain about it to—to somebody or other, see if I don't!'

'O dear! O dear!' cried the Rat, in despair at his obtuseness. 'Here, stop arguing and come and scrape!' And he set to work again and made the snow fly in all directions around him.

After some further toil his efforts were rewarded, and a very shabby door-mat lay exposed to view.

'There, what did I tell you?' exclaimed the Rat in great triumph.

'Absolutely nothing whatever,' replied the Mole, with perfect truthfulness. 'Well now,' he went on, 'you seem to have found another piece of domestic litter, done for and thrown away, and I suppose you're perfectly happy. Better go ahead and dance your jig round that if you've got to, and get it over, and then perhaps we can go on and not waste any more time over rubbish-heaps. Can we *eat* a door-mat? Or sleep under a door-mat? Or sit on a door-mat and sledge home over the snow on it, you exasperating rodent?'

'Do—you—mean—to—say,' cried the excited Rat, 'that this door-mat doesn't *tell* you anything?'

'Really, Rat,' said the Mole quite pettishly, 'I think we've had enough of this folly. Who ever heard of a door-mat *telling* any one anything? They simply don't do it. They are not that sort at all. Door-mats know their place.'

'Now look here, you—you thick-headed beast,' replied the Rat, really angry, 'this must stop. Not another word, but scrape—scrape and scratch and dig and hunt round, especially on the sides of the hummocks, if you want to sleep dry and warm tonight, for it's our last chance!'

The Rat attacked a snow-bank beside them with ardour, probing with his cudgel everywhere and then digging with fury; and then the Mole scraped busily too, more to oblige the Rat than for any other reason, for his opinion was that his friend was getting light-headed.

Some ten minutes' hard work, and the point of the Rat's cudgel struck something that sounded hollow. He worked till he could get a paw through and feel; then called the Mole to come and help him. Hard at it went the two animals, till at last the result of their labours stood full in view of the astonished and hitherto incredulous Mole.

In the side of what seemed to be a snow-bank stood a solid-looking little door, painted a dark green. An iron bell-pull hung by the side, and below it, on a small brass plate, neatly engraved in square capital letters, they could read by the aid of moonlight:—

MR. BADGER.

The Mole fell backwards on the snow from sheer surprise and delight. 'Rat!' he cried in penitence, 'you're a wonder! A real wonder, that's what you are. I see it all now! You argued it out, step by step, in that wise head of yours, from the very moment that I fell and cut my shin, and you looked at the cut, and at once your majestic mind said to itself, "Door-scraper!" And then you turned to and found the very door-scraper that done it! Did you stop there? No. Some people would have been quite satisfied; but not you. Your intellect went on working. "Let me only just find a door-mat," says you to yourself, "and my theory is proved!" And of course you found your door-mat. You're so clever, I believe you could find anything you liked. "Now," says you, "that door exists, as plain as if I saw it. There's nothing else remains to be done but to find it!" Well, I've read about that sort of thing in books, but I've never come across it before in real life. You ought to go where you'll be properly appreciated. You're simply wasted here, among us fellows. If I only had your head, Ratty—'*

'But as you haven't,' interrupted the Rat rather unkindly, 'I suppose you're going to sit on the snow all night and *talk*? Get up at once and hang on to that bell-pull you see there, and ring hard, as hard as you can, while I hammer!'

While the Rat attacked the door with his stick, the Mole sprang up at the door-bell, clutched it and swung there, both feet well off the ground, and from quite a long way off they could faintly hear a deep-toned bell respond.

MR. BADGER

THEY waited patiently for what seemed a very long time, stamping in the snow to keep their feet warm. At last they heard the sound of slow shuffling footsteps approaching the door from the inside. It seemed, as the Mole remarked to the Rat, like some one walking in carpet slippers that were too large for him and down at heel; which was intelligent of Mole, because that was exactly what it was.

There was the noise of a bolt shot back, and the door opened a few inches, enough to show a long snout and a pair of sleepy blinking eyes.

‘Now, the *very* next time this happens,’ said a gruff and suspicious voice, ‘I shall be exceedingly angry. Who is it *this* time, disturbing people on such a night? Speak up!’

‘O, Badger,’ cried the Rat, ‘let us in, please. It’s me, Rat, and my friend Mole, and we’ve lost our way in the snow.’

‘What, Ratty, my dear little man!’ exclaimed the Badger,* in quite a different voice. ‘Come along in, both of you, at once. Why, you must be perished. Well I never! Lost in the snow! And in the Wild Wood too, and at this time of night! But come in with you.’

The two animals tumbled over each other in their eagerness to get inside, and heard the door shut behind them with great joy and relief.

The Badger, who wore a long dressing-gown, and whose slippers were indeed very down-at-heel, carried a flat candle-stick* in his paw and had probably been on his way to bed when their summons sounded. He looked kindly down on them and patted both their heads. ‘This is not the sort of night for small animals to be out,’ he said paternally. ‘I’m afraid you’ve been up to some of your pranks again, Ratty. But come along; come into the kitchen. There’s a first-rate fire there, and supper and everything.’

He shuffled on in front of them, carrying the light, and they followed him, nudging each other in an anticipating sort of way, down a long, gloomy, and, to tell the truth, decidedly shabby passage, into a sort of a central hall, out of which they could dimly see other long tunnel-like passages branching, passages mysterious and without apparent end. But there were doors in the hall as well—stout oaken

comfortable-looking doors. One of these the Badger flung open, and at once they found themselves in all the glow and warmth of a large fire-lit kitchen.*

The floor was well-worn red brick, and on the wide hearth burnt a fire of logs, between two attractive chimney-corners tucked away in the wall, well out of any suspicion of draught. A couple of high-backed settles, facing each other on either side of the fire, gave further sitting accommodation for the sociably disposed. In the middle of the room stood a long table of plain boards placed on trestles, with benches down each side. At one end of it, where an arm-chair stood pushed back, were spread the remains of the Badger's plain but ample supper. Rows of spotless plates winked from the shelves of the dresser at the far end of the room, and from the rafters overhead hung hams, bundles of dried herbs, nets of onions, and baskets of eggs. It seemed a place where heroes could fitly feast after victory,* where weary harvesters could line up in scores along the table and keep their Harvest Home* with mirth and song, or where two or three friends of simple tastes could sit about as they pleased and eat and smoke and talk in comfort and contentment. The ruddy brick floor smiled up at the smoky ceiling; the oaken settles, shiny with long wear, exchanged cheerful glances with each other; plates on the dresser grinned at pots on the shelf, and the merry firelight flickered and played over everything without distinction.

The kindly Badger thrust them down on a settle to toast themselves at the fire, and bade them remove their wet coats and boots. Then he fetched them dressing-gowns and slippers, and himself bathed the Mole's shin with warm water and mended the cut with sticking-plaster till the whole thing was just as good as new, if not better. In the embracing light and warmth, warm and dry at last, with weary legs propped up in front of them, and a suggestive clink of plates being arranged on the table behind, it seemed to the storm-driven animals, now in safe anchorage, that the cold and trackless Wild Wood just left outside was miles and miles away, and all that they had suffered in it a half-forgotten dream.

When at last they were thoroughly toasted, the Badger summoned them to the table, where he had been busy laying a repast. They had felt pretty hungry before, but when they actually saw at last the supper that was spread for them, really it seemed only a question of what they should attack first where all was so attractive, and whether the

other things would obligingly wait for them till they had the time to give them attention. Conversation was impossible for a long time; and when it was slowly resumed, it was that regrettable sort of conversation that results from talking with your mouth full. The Badger did not mind that sort of thing at all, nor did he take any notice of elbows on the table, or everybody speaking at once. As he did not go into Society himself, he had got an idea that these things belonged to the things that really didn't matter. (We know of course that he was wrong, and took too narrow a view; because they do matter very much, though it would take too long to explain why.) He sat in his arm-chair at the head of the table, and nodded gravely at intervals as the animals told their story; and he did not seem surprised or shocked at anything, and he never said, 'I told you so,' or, 'Just what I always said,' or remarked that they ought to have done so-and-so, or ought not to have done something else. The Mole began to feel very friendly towards him.

When supper was really finished at last, and each animal felt that his skin was now as tight as was decently safe, and that by this time he didn't care a hang for anybody or anything, they gathered round the glowing embers of the great wood fire, and thought how jolly it was to be sitting up *so* late, and *so* independent, and *so* full; and after they had chatted for a time about things in general, the Badger said heartily, 'Now then! tell us the news from your part of the world. How's old Toad going on?'

'O, from bad to worse,' said the Rat gravely, while the Mole, cocked up on a settle and basking in the firelight, his heels higher than his head, tried to look properly mournful. 'Another smash-up only last week, and a bad one. You see, he will insist on driving himself, and he's hopelessly incapable. If he'd only employ a decent, steady, well-trained animal, pay him good wages, and leave everything to him, he'd get on all right. But no; he's convinced he's a heaven-born driver, and nobody can teach him anything; and all the rest follows.'

'How many has he had?' inquired the Badger gloomily.

'Smashes, or machines?' asked the Rat. 'O, well, after all, it's the same thing—with Toad. This is the seventh. As for the others—you know that coach-house of his? Well, it's piled up—literally piled up to the roof—with fragments of motor-cars, none of them bigger than your hat! That accounts for the other six—so far as they can be accounted for.

'He's been in hospital three times,' put in the Mole; 'and as for the fines he's had to pay, it's simply awful to think of.'

'Yes, and that's part of the trouble,' continued the Rat. 'Toad's rich, we all know; but he's not a millionaire. And he's a hopelessly bad driver, and quite regardless of law and order. Killed or ruined—it's got to be one of the two things, sooner or later. Badger! we're his friends—oughtn't we to do something?'

The Badger went through a bit of hard thinking. 'Now look here!' he said at last, rather severely; 'of course you know I can't do anything *now*?'

His two friends assented, quite understanding his point. No animal, according to the rules of animal-etiquette, is ever expected to do anything strenuous, or heroic, or even moderately active during the off-season of winter. All are sleepy—some actually asleep. All are weather-bound, more or less; and all are resting from arduous days and nights, during which every muscle in them has been severely tested, and every energy kept at full stretch.

'Very well then!' continued the Badger. '*But*, when once the year has really turned, and the nights are shorter, and half-way through them one rouses and feels fidgety and wanting to be up and doing by sunrise, if not before—you know—!'

Both animals nodded gravely. *They* knew!

'Well, *then*,' went on the Badger, 'we—that is, you and me and our friend the Mole here—we'll take Toad seriously in hand. We'll stand no nonsense whatever. We'll bring him back to reason, by force if need be. We'll *make* him be a sensible Toad. We'll—you're asleep, Rat!'

'Not me!' said the Rat, waking up with a jerk.

'He's been asleep two or three times since supper,' said the Mole, laughing. He himself was feeling quite wakeful and even lively, though he didn't know why. The reason was, of course, that he being naturally an underground animal by birth and breeding, the situation of Badger's house exactly suited him and made him feel at home; while the Rat, who slept every night in a bedroom the windows of which opened on a breezy river, naturally felt the atmosphere still and oppressive.

'Well, it's time we were all in bed,' said the Badger, getting up and fetching flat candlesticks. 'Come along, you two, and I'll show you your quarters. And take your time to-morrow morning—breakfast at any hour you please!'

He conducted the two animals to a long room that seemed half bedchamber and half loft. The Badger's winter stores, which indeed were visible everywhere, took up half the room—piles of apples, turnips, and potatoes, baskets full of nuts, and jars of honey; but the two little white beds on the remainder of the floor looked soft and inviting, and the linen on them, though coarse, was clean and smelt beautifully of lavender; and the Mole and the Water Rat, shaking off their garments in some thirty seconds, tumbled in between the sheets in great joy and contentment.

In accordance with the kindly Badger's injunctions, the two tired animals came down to breakfast very late next morning, and found a bright fire burning in the kitchen, and two young hedgehogs sitting on a bench at the table, eating oatmeal porridge out of wooden bowls. The hedgehogs dropped their spoons, rose to their feet, and ducked their heads respectfully as the two entered.

'There, sit down, sit down,' said the Rat pleasantly, 'and go on with your porridge. Where have you youngsters come from? Lost your way in the snow, I suppose?'

'Yes, please, sir,' said the elder of the two hedgehogs respectfully. 'Me and little Billy here, we was trying to find our way to school—mother *would* have us go, was the weather ever so—and of course we lost ourselves, sir, and Billy he got frightened and took and cried, being young and faint-hearted. And at last we happened up against Mr. Badger's back door, and made so bold as to knock, sir, for Mr. Badger he's a kind-hearted gentleman, as every one knows—'

'I understand,' said the Rat, cutting himself some rashers from a side of bacon, while the Mole dropped some eggs into a saucepan. 'And what's the weather like outside? You needn't "sir" me quite so much,' he added.

'O, terrible bad, sir, terrible deep the snow is,' said the hedgehog. 'No getting out for the likes of you gentlemen to-day.'

'Where's Mr. Badger?' inquired the Mole, as he warmed the coffee-pot before the fire.

'The master's gone into his study, sir,' replied the hedgehog, 'and he said as how he was going to be particular busy this morning, and on no account was he to be disturbed.'

This explanation, of course, was thoroughly understood by everyone present. The fact is, as already set forth, when you live a life of intense activity for six months in the year, and of comparative or

actual somnolence for the other six, during the latter period you cannot be continually pleading sleepiness when there are people about or things to be done. The excuse gets monotonous. The animals well knew that Badger, having eaten a hearty breakfast, had retired to his study and settled himself in an arm-chair with his legs up on another and a red cotton handkerchief over his face, and was being 'busy' in the usual way at this time of the year.

The front-door bell clanged loudly, and the Rat, who was very greasy with buttered toast, sent Billy, the smaller hedgehog, to see who it might be. There was a sound of much stamping in the hall, and presently Billy returned in front of the Otter, who threw himself on the Rat with an embrace and a shout of affectionate greeting.

'Get off!' spluttered the Rat, with his mouth full.

'Thought I should find you here all right,' said the Otter cheerfully. 'They were all in a great state of alarm along River Bank when I arrived this morning. Rat never been home all night—nor Mole either—something dreadful must have happened, they said; and the snow had covered up all your tracks, of course. But I knew that when people were in any fix they mostly went to Badger, or else Badger got to know of it somehow, so I came straight off here, through the Wild Wood and the snow! My! it was fine, coming through the snow as the red sun was rising and showing against the black tree-trunks! As you went along in the stillness, every now and then masses of snow slid off the branches suddenly with a flop! making you jump and run for cover. Snow-castles and snow-caverns had sprung up out of nowhere in the night—and snow bridges, terraces, ramparts—I could have stayed and played with them for hours. Here and there great branches had been torn away by the sheer weight of the snow, and robins perched and hopped on them in their perky conceited way, just as if they had done it themselves. A ragged string of wild geese passed overhead, high on the grey sky, and a few rooks whirled over the trees, inspected, and flapped off homewards with a disgusted expression; but I met no sensible being to ask the news of. About half-way across I came on a rabbit sitting on a stump, cleaning his silly face with his paws. He was a pretty scared animal when I crept up behind him and placed a heavy fore-paw on his shoulder. I had to cuff his head once or twice to get any sense out of it at all. At last I managed to extract from him that Mole had been seen in the Wild Wood last night by one of them. It was the talk of the burrows, he said, how Mole, Mr. Rat's

particular friend, was in a bad fix; how he had lost his way, and "They" were up and out hunting, and were chivvying him round and round. "Then why didn't any of you *do* something?" I asked. "You mayn't be blest with brains, but there are hundreds and hundreds of you, big, stout fellows, as fat as butter, and your burrows running in all directions, and you could have taken him in and made him safe and comfortable, or tried to, at all events." "What, *us*?" he merely said: "*do* something? us rabbits?" So I cuffed him again and left him. There was nothing else to be done. At any rate, I had learnt something; and if I had had the luck to meet any of "Them" I'd have learnt something more—or *they* would.'

'Weren't you at all—er—nervous?' asked the Mole, some of yesterday's terror coming back to him at the mention of the Wild Wood.

'Nervous?' The Otter showed a gleaming set of strong white teeth as he laughed. 'I'd give 'em nerves if any of them tried anything on with me. Here, Mole, fry me some slices of ham, like the good little chap you are. I'm frightfully hungry, and I've got any amount to say to Ratty here. Haven't seen him for an age.'

So the good-natured Mole, having cut some slices of ham, set the hedgehogs to fry it, and returned to his own breakfast, while the Otter and the Rat, their heads together, eagerly talked river-shop, which is long shop and talk that is endless, running on like the babbling river itself.

A plate of fried ham had just been cleared and sent back for more, when the Badger entered, yawning and rubbing his eyes, and greeted them all in his quiet, simple way, with kind inquiries for every one. 'It must be getting on for luncheon time,' he remarked to the Otter. 'Better stop and have it with us. You must be hungry, this cold morning.'

'Rather!' replied the Otter, winking at the Mole. 'The sight of these greedy young hedgehogs stuffing themselves with fried ham makes me feel positively famished.'

The hedgehogs, who were just beginning to feel hungry again after their porridge, and after working so hard at their frying, looked timidly up at Mr. Badger, but were too shy to say anything.

'Here, you two youngsters be off home to your mother,' said the Badger kindly. 'I'll send some one with you to show you the way. You won't want any dinner to-day, I'll be bound.'

He gave them sixpence apiece and a pat on the head, and they went off with much respectful swinging of caps and touching of forelocks.

Presently they all sat down to luncheon together. The Mole found himself placed next to Mr. Badger, and, as the other two were still deep in river-gossip from which nothing could divert them, he took the opportunity to tell Badger how comfortable and home-like it all felt to him. 'Once well underground,' he said, 'you know exactly where you are. Nothing can happen to you, and nothing can get at you. You're entirely your own master, and you don't have to consult anybody or mind what they say. Things go on all the same overhead, and you let 'em, and don't bother about 'em. When you want to, up you go, and there the things are, waiting for you.'

The Badger simply beamed on him. 'That's exactly what I say,' he replied. 'There's no security, or peace and tranquillity, except underground. And then, if your ideas get larger and you want to expand—why, a dig and a scrape, and there you are! If you feel your house is a bit too big, you stop up a hole or two, and there you are again! No builders, no tradesmen, no remarks passed on you by fellows looking over your wall, and, above all, no *weather*. Look at Rat, now. A couple of feet of flood-water, and he's got to move into hired lodgings; uncomfortable, inconveniently situated, and horribly expensive. Take Toad. I say nothing against Toad Hall; quite the best house in these parts, *as* a house. But supposing a fire breaks out—where's Toad? Supposing tiles are blown off, or walls sink or crack, or windows get broken—where's Toad? Supposing the rooms are draughty—I *hate* a draught myself—where's Toad? No, up and out of doors is good enough to roam about and get one's living in; but underground to come back to at last—that's my idea of *home*!'

The Mole assented heartily; and the Badger in consequence got very friendly with him. 'When lunch is over,' he said, 'I'll take you all round this little place of mine. I can see you'll appreciate it. You understand what domestic architecture ought to be, you do.'

After luncheon, accordingly, when the other two had settled themselves into the chimney-corner and had started a heated argument on the subject of *eels*, the Badger lighted a lantern and bade the Mole follow him. Crossing the hall, they passed down one of the principal tunnels, and the wavering lights of the lantern gave glimpses on either side of rooms both large and small, some mere cupboards, others nearly as broad and imposing as Toad's dining-room. A narrow passage

at right angles led them into another corridor, and here the same thing was repeated. The Mole was staggered at the size, the extent, the ramifications of it all; at the length of the dim passages, the solid vaultings of the crammed store-chambers, the masonry everywhere, the pillars, the arches, the pavements. 'How on earth, Badger,' he said at last, 'did you ever find time and strength to do all this? It's astonishing!'

'It *would* be astonishing indeed,' said the Badger simply, 'if I *had* done it. But as a matter of fact I did none of it—only cleaned out the passages and chambers, as far as I had need of them. There's lots more of it, all round about. I see you don't understand, and I must explain it to you. Well, very long ago, on the spot where the Wild Wood waves now, before ever it had planted itself and grown up to what it now is, there was a city—a city of people, you know. Here, where we are standing, they lived, and walked, and talked, and slept, and carried on their business. Here they stabled their horses and feasted, from here they rode out to fight or drove out to trade. They were a powerful people, and rich, and great builders. They built to last, for they thought their city would last for ever.'

'But what has become of them all?' asked the Mole.

'Who can tell?' said the Badger. 'People come—they stay for a while, they flourish, they build—and they go. It is their way. But we remain. There were badgers here, I've been told, long before that same city ever came to be. And now there are badgers here again. We are an enduring lot, and we may move out for a time, but we wait, and are patient, and back we come. And so it will ever be.'

'Well, and when they went at last, those people?' said the Mole.

'When they went,' continued the Badger, 'the strong winds and persistent rains took the matter in hand, patiently, ceaselessly, year after year. Perhaps we badgers too, in our small way, helped a little—who knows? It was all down, down, down, gradually—ruin and levelling and disappearance. Then it was all up, up, up, gradually, as seeds grew to saplings, and saplings to forest trees, and bramble and fern came creeping in to help. Leaf-mould rose and obliterated, streams in their winter freshets* brought sand and soil to clog and to cover, and in course of time our home was ready for us again, and we moved in. Up above us, on the surface, the same thing happened. Animals arrived, liked the look of the place, took up their quarters, settled down, spread, and flourished. They didn't bother themselves about the past—they never do; they're too busy. The place was a bit humpy and

hillocky, naturally, and full of holes; but that was rather an advantage. And they don't bother about the future, either—the future when perhaps the people will move in again—for a time—as may very well be. The Wild Wood is pretty well populated by now; with all the usual lot, good, bad, and indifferent—I name no names. It takes all sorts to make a world. But I fancy you know something about them yourself by this time.'

'I do indeed,' said the Mole, with a slight shiver.

'Well, well,' said the Badger, patting him on the shoulder, 'it was your first experience of them, you see. They're not so bad really; and we must all live and let live. But I'll pass the word round to-morrow, and I think you'll have no further trouble. Any friend of *mine* walks where he likes in this country, or I'll know the reason why!'

When they got back to the kitchen again, they found the Rat walking up and down, very restless. The underground atmosphere was oppressing him and getting on his nerves, and he seemed really to be afraid that the river would run away if he wasn't there to look after it. So he had his overcoat on, and his pistols thrust into his belt again. 'Come along, Mole,' he said anxiously, as soon as he caught sight of them. 'We must get off while it's daylight. Don't want to spend another night in the Wild Wood again.'

'It'll be all right, my fine fellow,' said the Otter. 'I'm coming along with you, and I know every path blindfold; and if there's a head that needs to be punched, you can confidently rely upon me to punch it.'

'You really needn't fret, Ratty,' added the Badger placidly. 'My passages run further than you think, and I've bolt-holes to the edge of the wood in several directions, though I don't care for everybody to know about them. When you really have to go, you shall leave by one of my short cuts. Meantime, make yourself easy, and sit down again.'

The Rat was nevertheless still anxious to be off and attend to his river, so the Badger, taking up his lantern again, led the way along a damp and airless tunnel that wound and dipped, part vaulted, part hewn through solid rock, for a weary distance that seemed to be miles. At last daylight began to show itself confusedly through tangled growth overhanging the mouth of the passage; and the Badger, bidding them a hasty good-bye, pushed them hurriedly through the opening, made everything look as natural as possible again, with creepers, brushwood, and dead leaves, and retreated.

They found themselves standing on the very edge of the Wild Wood. Rocks and brambles and tree-roots behind them, confusedly heaped and tangled; in front, a great space of quiet fields, hemmed by lines of hedges black on the snow, and, far ahead, a glint of the familiar old river, while the wintry sun hung red and low on the horizon. The Otter, as knowing all the paths, took charge of the party, and they trailed out on a bee-line for a distant stile. Pausing there a moment and looking back, they saw the whole mass of the Wild Wood, dense, menacing, compact, grimly set in vast white surroundings; simultaneously they turned and made swiftly for home, for firelight and the familiar things it played on, for the voice, sounding cheerily outside their window, of the river that they knew and trusted in all its moods, that never made them afraid with any amazement.

As he hurried along, eagerly anticipating the moment when he would be at home again among the things he knew and liked, the Mole saw clearly that he was an animal of the tilled field and hedgerow, linked to the ploughed furrow, the frequented pasture, the lane of evening lingerings, the cultivated garden-plot. For others the asperities, the stubborn endurance, or the clash of actual conflict, that went with Nature in the rough; he must be wise, must keep to the pleasant places in which his lines were laid and which held adventure enough, in their way, to last for a lifetime.

DULCE DOMUM*

THE sheep ran huddling together against the hurdles, blowing out thin nostrils and stamping with delicate fore-feet, their heads thrown back and a light steam rising from the crowded sheep-pen into the frosty air, as the two animals hastened by in high spirits, with much chatter and laughter. They were returning across country after a long day's outing with Otter, hunting and exploring on the wide uplands where certain streams tributary to their own river had their first small beginnings; and the shades of the short winter day were closing in on them, and they had still some distance to go. Plodding at random across the plough,* they had heard the sheep and had made for them; and now, leading from the sheep-pen, they found a beaten track that made walking a lighter business, and responded, moreover, to that small inquiring something which all animals carry inside them, saying unmistakably, 'Yes, quite right; *this* leads home!'

'It looks as if we're coming to a village,' said the Mole somewhat dubiously, slackening his pace, as the track, that had in time become a path and then had developed into a lane, now handed them over to the charge of a well-metalled road.* The animals did not hold with villages, and their own highways, thickly frequented as they were, took an independent course, regardless of church, post-office, or public-house.

'Oh, never mind!' said the Rat. 'At this season of the year they're all safe indoors by this time, sitting round the fire; men, women, and children, dogs and cats and all. We shall slip through all right, without any bother or unpleasantness, and we can have a look at them through their windows if you like, and see what they're doing.'

The rapid nightfall of mid-December had quite beset the little village as they approached it on soft feet over a first thin fall of powdery snow. Little was visible but squares of a dusky orange-red on either side of the street, where the firelight or lamplight of each cottage overflowed through the casements* into the dark world without. Most of the low latticed windows were innocent of blinds, and to the lookers-in from outside, the inmates, gathered round the tea-table, absorbed in handiwork, or talking with laughter and gesture, had each

that happy grace which is the last thing the skilled actor shall capture—the natural grace which goes with perfect unconsciousness of observation. Moving at will from one theatre to another, the two spectators, so far from home themselves, had something of wistfulness in their eyes as they watched a cat being stroked, a sleepy child picked up and huddled off to bed, or a tired man stretch and knock out his pipe on the end of a smouldering log.

But it was from one little window, with its blind drawn down, a mere blank transparency on the night, that the sense of home and the little curtained world within walls—the larger stressful world of outside Nature shut out and forgotten—most pulsed. Close against the white blind hung a bird-cage, clearly silhouetted, every wire, perch, and appurtenance distinct and recognisable, even to yesterday's dull-edged lump of sugar. On the middle perch the fluffy occupant, head tucked well into feathers, seemed so near to them as to be easily stroked, had they tried; even the delicate tips of his plumped-out plumage pencilled plainly on the illuminated screen. As they looked, the sleepy little fellow stirred uneasily, woke, shook himself, and raised his head. They could see the gape of his tiny beak as he yawned in a bored sort of way, looked round, and then settled his head into his back again, while the ruffled feathers gradually subsided into perfect stillness. Then a gust of bitter wind took them in the back of the neck, a small sting of frozen sleet on the skin woke them as from a dream, and they knew their toes to be cold and their legs tired, and their own home distant a weary way.

Once beyond the village, where the cottages ceased abruptly, on either side of the road they could smell through the darkness the friendly fields again; and they braced themselves for the last long stretch, the home stretch, the stretch that we know is bound to end, some time, in the rattle of the door-latch, the sudden firelight, and the sight of familiar things greeting us as long-absent travellers from far oversea. They plodded along steadily and silently, each of them thinking his own thoughts. The Mole's ran a good deal on supper, as it was pitch dark, and it was all a strange country to him as far as he knew, and he was following obediently in the wake of the Rat, leaving the guidance entirely to him. As for the Rat, he was walking a little way ahead, as his habit was, his shoulders humped, his eyes fixed on the straight grey road in front of him; so he did not notice poor Mole when suddenly the summons reached him, and took him like an electric shock.

We others, who have long lost the more subtle of the physical senses, have not even proper terms to express an animal's intercommunications with his surroundings, living or otherwise, and have only the word 'smell', for instance, to include the whole range of delicate thrills which murmur in the nose of the animal night and day, summoning, warning, inciting, repelling. It was one of these mysterious fairy calls from out the void that suddenly reached Mole in the darkness, making him tingle through and through with its very familiar appeal, even while as yet he could not clearly remember what it was. He stopped dead in his tracks, his nose searching hither and thither in its efforts to recapture the fine filament, the telegraphic current, that had so strongly moved him. A moment, and he had caught it again; and with it this time came recollection in fullest flood.

Home! That was what they meant, those caressing appeals, those soft touches wafted through the air, those invisible little hands pulling and tugging, all one way! Why, it must be quite close by him at that moment, his old home that he had hurriedly forsaken and never sought again, that day when he first found the river! And now it was sending out its scouts and its messengers to capture him and bring him in. Since his escape on that bright morning he had hardly given it a thought, so absorbed had he been in his new life, in all its pleasures, its surprises, its fresh and captivating experiences. Now, with a rush of old memories, how clearly it stood up before him, in the darkness! Shabby indeed, and small and poorly furnished, and yet his, the home he had made for himself, the home he had been so happy to get back to after his day's work. And the home had been happy with him, too, evidently, and was missing him, and wanted him back, and was telling him so, through his nose, sorrowfully, reproachfully, but with no bitterness or anger; only with plaintive reminder that it was there, and wanted him.

The call was clear, the summons was plain. He must obey it instantly, and go. 'Ratty!' he called, full of joyful excitement, 'hold on! Come back! I want you, quick!'

'O, *come* along, Mole, do!' replied the Rat cheerfully, still plodding along.

'*Please* stop, Ratty!' pleaded the poor Mole, in anguish of heart. 'You don't understand! It's my home, my old home! I've just come across the smell of it, and it's close by here, really quite close. And I *must* go to it, I must, I must! O, come back, Ratty! Please, please come back!'

The Rat was by this time very far ahead, too far to hear clearly what the Mole was calling, too far to catch the sharp note of painful appeal in his voice. And he was much taken up with the weather, for he too could smell something—something suspiciously like approaching snow.

‘Mole, we mustn’t stop now, really!’ he called back. ‘We’ll come for it to-morrow, whatever it is you’ve found. But I daren’t stop now—it’s late, and the snow’s coming on again, and I’m not sure of the way! And I want your nose, Mole, so come on quick, there’s a good fellow!’ And the Rat pressed forward on his way without waiting for an answer.

Poor Mole stood alone in the road, his heart torn asunder, and a big sob gathering, gathering, somewhere low down inside him, to leap up to the surface presently, he knew, in passionate escape. But even under such a test as this his loyalty to his friend stood firm. Never for a moment did he dream of abandoning him. Meanwhile, the wafts from his old home pleaded, whispered, conjured, and finally claimed him imperiously. He dared not tarry longer within their magic circle. With a wrench that tore his very heartstrings he set his face down the road and followed submissively in the track of the Rat, while faint, thin little smells, still dogging his retreating nose, reproached him for his new friendship and his callous forgetfulness.

With an effort he caught up the unsuspecting Rat, who began chattering cheerfully about what they would do when they got back, and how jolly a fire of logs in the parlour would be, and what a supper he meant to eat; never noticing his companion’s silence and distressful state of mind. At last, however, when they had gone some considerable way further, and were passing some tree-stumps at the edge of a copse that bordered the road, he stopped and said kindly, ‘Look here, Mole, old chap, you seem dead tired. No talk left in you, and your feet dragging like lead. We’ll sit down here for a minute and rest. The snow has held off so far, and the best part of our journey is over.’

The Mole subsided forlornly on a tree-stump and tried to control himself, for he felt it surely coming. The sob he had fought with so long refused to be beaten. Up and up, it forced its way to the air, and then another, and another, and others thick and fast; till poor Mole at last gave up the struggle, and cried freely and helplessly and openly, now that he knew it was all over and he had lost what he could hardly be said to have found.

The Rat, astonished and dismayed at the violence of Mole's paroxysm of grief, did not dare to speak for a while. At last he said, very quietly and sympathetically, 'What is it, old fellow? Whatever can be the matter? Tell us your trouble, and let me see what I can do.'

Poor Mole found it difficult to get any words out between the upheavals of his chest that followed one upon another so quickly and held back speech and choked it as it came. 'I know it's a—shabby, dingy little place,' he sobbed forth at last, brokenly: 'not like—your cosy quarters—or Toad's beautiful hall—or Badger's great house—but it was my own little home—and I was fond of it—and I went away and forgot all about it—and then I smelt it suddenly—on the road, when I called and you wouldn't listen, Rat—and everything came back to me with a rush—and I *wanted* it!—O dear, O dear!—and when you *wouldn't* turn back, Ratty—and I had to leave it, though I was smelling it all the time—I thought my heart would break.—We might have just gone and had one look at it, Ratty—only one look—it was close by—but you wouldn't turn back, Ratty, you wouldn't turn back! O dear, O dear!'

Recollection brought fresh waves of sorrow, and sobs again took full charge of him, preventing further speech.

The Rat stared straight in front of him, saying nothing, only patting Mole gently on the shoulder. After a time he muttered gloomily, 'I see it all now! What a *pig* I have been! A pig—that's me! Just a pig—a plain pig!'

He waited till Mole's sobs became gradually less stormy and more rhythmical; he waited till at last sniffs were frequent and sobs only intermittent. Then he rose from his seat, and, remarking carelessly, 'Well, now we'd really better be getting on, old chap!' set off up the road again, over the toilsome way they had come.

'Wherever are you (hic) going to (hic), Ratty?' cried the tearful Mole, looking up in alarm.

'We're going to find that home of yours, old fellow,' replied the Rat pleasantly; 'so you had better come along, for it will take some finding, and we shall want your nose.'

'O, come back, Ratty, do!' cried the Mole, getting up and hurrying after him. 'It's no good, I tell you! It's too late, and too dark, and the place is too far off, and the snow's coming! And—and I never meant to let you know I was feeling that way about it—it was all an accident and a mistake! And think of River Bank, and your supper!'

'Hang River Bank, and supper too!' said the Rat heartily. 'I tell you, I'm going to find this place now, if I stay out all night. So cheer up, old chap, and take my arm, and we'll very soon be back there again.'

Still snuffling, pleading, and reluctant, Mole suffered himself to be dragged back along the road by his imperious companion, who by a flow of cheerful talk and anecdote endeavoured to beguile his spirits back and make the weary way seem shorter. When at last it seemed to the Rat that they must be nearing that part of the road where the Mole had been 'held up', he said, 'Now, no more talking. Business! Use your nose, and give your mind to it.'

They moved on in silence for some little way, when suddenly the Rat was conscious, through his arm that was linked in Mole's, of a faint sort of electric thrill that was passing down that animal's body. Instantly he disengaged himself, fell back a pace, and waited, all attention.

The signals were coming through!

Mole stood a moment rigid, while his uplifted nose, quivering slightly, felt the air.

Then a short, quick run forward—a fault—a check—a try back; and then a slow, steady, confident advance.

The Rat, much excited, kept close to his heels as the Mole, with something of the air of a sleep-walker, crossed a dry ditch, scrambled through a hedge, and nosed his way over a field open and trackless and bare in the faint starlight.

Suddenly, without giving warning, he dived; but the Rat was on the alert, and promptly followed him down the tunnel to which his unerring nose had faithfully led him.

It was close and airless, and the earthy smell was strong, and it seemed a long time to Rat ere the passage ended and he could stand erect and stretch and shake himself. The Mole struck a match, and by its light the Rat saw that they were standing in an open space, neatly swept and sanded underfoot, and directly facing them was Mole's little front door, with 'Mole End' painted, in Gothic lettering, over the bell-pull at the side.

Mole reached down a lantern from a nail on the wall and lit it, and the Rat, looking round him, saw that they were in a sort of fore-court. A garden-seat stood on one side of the door, and on the other, a roller; for the Mole, who was a tidy animal when at home, could not stand having his ground kicked up by other animals into little runs that ended in earth-heaps. On the walls hung wire baskets with ferns in

them, alternating with brackets carrying plaster statuary—Garibaldi, and the infant Samuel, and Queen Victoria, and other heroes of modern Italy.* Down one side of the fore-court ran a skittle-alley, with benches along it and little wooden tables marked with rings that hinted at beer-mugs. In the middle was a small round pond containing goldfish* and surrounded by a cockle-shell border. Out of the centre of the pond rose a fanciful erection clothed in more cockle-shells and topped by a large silvered glass ball that reflected everything all wrong and had a very pleasing effect.

Mole's face beamed at the sight of all these objects so dear to him, and he hurried Rat through the door, lit a lamp in the hall, and took one glance round his old home. He saw the dust lying thick on everything, saw the cheerless, deserted look of the long-neglected house, and its narrow, meagre dimensions, its worn and shabby contents—and collapsed again on a hall-chair, his nose in his paws. 'O, Ratty!' he cried dismally, 'why ever did I do it? Why did I bring you to this poor, cold little place, on a night like this, when you might have been at River Bank by this time, toasting your toes before a blazing fire, with all your own nice things about you!'

The Rat paid no heed to his doleful self-reproaches. He was running here and there, opening doors, inspecting rooms and cupboards, and lighting lamps and candles and sticking them up everywhere. 'What a capital little house this is!' he called out cheerily. 'So compact! So well planned! Everything here and everything in its place! We'll make a jolly night of it. The first thing we want is a good fire; I'll see to that—I always know where to find things. So this is the parlour? Splendid! Your own idea, those little sleeping-bunks in the wall? Capital! Now, I'll fetch the wood and the coals, and you get a duster, Mole—you'll find one in the drawer of the kitchen table—and try and smarten things up a bit. Bustle about, old chap!'

Encouraged by his inspiring companion, the Mole roused himself and dusted and polished with energy and heartiness, while the Rat, running to and fro with armfuls of fuel, soon had a cheerful blaze roaring up the chimney. He hailed the Mole to come and warm himself; but Mole promptly had another fit of the blues, dropping down on a couch in dark despair and burying his face in his duster.

'Rat,' he moaned, 'how about your supper, you poor, cold, hungry, weary animal? I've nothing to give you—nothing—not a crumb!'

'What a fellow you are for giving in!' said the Rat reproachfully. 'Why, only just now I saw a sardine-opener on the kitchen dresser,

quite distinctly; and everybody knows that means there are sardines about somewhere in the neighbourhood. Rouse yourself! pull yourself together, and come with me and forage.'

They went and foraged accordingly, hunting through every cupboard and turning out every drawer. The result was not so very depressing after all, though of course it might have been better; a tin of sardines—a box of captain's biscuits,* nearly full—and a German sausage encased in silver paper.

'There's a banquet for you!' observed the Rat, as he arranged the table. 'I know some animals who would give their ears to be sitting down to supper with us to-night!'

'No bread!' groaned the Mole dolorously; 'no butter, no—'

'No *pâté de foie gras*, no champagne!' continued the Rat, grinning. 'And that reminds me—what's that little door at the end of the passage? Your cellar, of course! Every luxury in this house! Just you wait a minute.'

He made for the cellar door, and presently reappeared, somewhat dusty, with a bottle of beer in each paw and another under each arm. 'Self-indulgent beggar you seem to be, Mole,' he observed. 'Deny yourself nothing. This is really the jolliest little place I ever was in. Now, wherever did you pick up those prints? Make the place look so home-like, they do. No wonder you're so fond of it, Mole. Tell us all about it, and how you came to make it what it is.'

Then, while the Rat busied himself fetching plates, and knives and forks, and mustard which he mixed in an egg-cup, the Mole, his bosom still heaving with the stress of his recent emotion, related—somewhat shyly at first, but with more freedom as he warmed to his subject—how this was planned, and how that was thought out, and how this was got through a windfall from an aunt, and that was a wonderful find and a bargain, and this other thing was bought out of laborious savings and a certain amount of 'going without'. His spirits finally quite restored, he must needs go and caress his possessions, and take a lamp and show off their points to his visitor and expatiate on them, quite forgetful of the supper they both so much needed; Rat, who was desperately hungry but strove to conceal it, nodding seriously, examining with a puckered brow, and saying, 'Wonderful', and 'Most remarkable', at intervals, when the chance for an observation was given him.

At last the Rat succeeded in decoying him to the table, and had just got seriously to work with the sardine-opener when sounds were heard from the fore-court without—sounds like the scuffling of

small feet in the gravel and a confused murmur of tiny voices, while broken sentences reached them—‘Now, all in a line—hold the lantern up a bit, Tommy—clear your throats first—no coughing after I say one, two, three.—Where’s young Bill?—Here, come on, do, we’re all a-waiting—’

‘What’s up?’ inquired the Rat, pausing in his labours.

‘I think it must be the field-mice,’ replied the Mole, with a touch of pride in his manner. ‘They go round carol-singing regularly at this time of the year. They’re quite an institution in these parts. And they never pass me over—they come to Mole End last of all; and I used to give them hot drinks, and supper too sometimes, when I could afford it. It will be like old times to hear them again.’

‘Let’s have a look at them!’ cried the Rat, jumping up and running to the door.

It was a pretty sight, and a seasonable one, that met their eyes when they flung the door open. In the fore-court, lit by the dim rays of a horn lantern,* some eight or ten little field-mice stood in a semicircle, red worsted comforters* round their throats, their fore-paws thrust deep into their pockets, their feet jiggling for warmth. With bright beady eyes they glanced shyly at each other, sniggering a little, sniffing and applying coat-sleeves a good deal. As the door opened, one of the elder ones that carried the lantern was just saying, ‘Now then, one, two, three!’ and forthwith their shrill little voices uprose on the air, singing one of the old-time carols that their forefathers composed in fields that were fallow and held by frost, or when snow-bound in chimney corners, and handed down to be sung in the miry street to lamp-lit windows at Yule-time.*

*CAROL**

*Villagers all, this frosty tide,
Let your doors swing open wide,
Though wind may follow, and snow beside,
Yet draw us in by your fire to bide;
Joy shall be yours in the morning!*

*Here we stand in the cold and the sleet,
Blowing fingers and stamping feet,
Come from far away you to greet—
You by the fire and we in the street—
Bidding you joy in the morning!*

*For ere one half of the night was gone,
Sudden a star has led us on,
Raining bliss and benison*—
Bliss to-morrow and more anon,
Joy for every morning!*

*Goodman Joseph toiled through the snow—
Saw the star o'er a stable low;
Mary she might not further go—
Welcome thatch, and litter* below!
Joy was hers in the morning!*

*And then they heard the angels tell
'Who were the first to cry Nowell?
Animals all, as it befell,
In the stable where they did dwell!
Joy shall be theirs in the morning!'*

The voices ceased, the singers, bashful but smiling, exchanged sidelong glances, and silence succeeded—but for a moment only. Then, from up above and far away, down the tunnel they had so lately travelled was borne to their ears in a faint musical hum the sound of distant bells ringing a joyful and clangorous peal.

'Very well sung, boys!' cried the Rat heartily. 'And now, come along in, all of you, and warm yourselves by the fire, and have something hot!'

'Yes, come along, field-mice,' cried the Mole eagerly. 'This is quite like old times! Shut the door after you. Pull up that settle to the fire. Now, you just wait a minute, while we—O, Ratty!' he cried in despair, plumping down on a seat, with tears impending. 'Whatever are we doing? We've nothing to give them!'

'You leave all that to me,' said the masterful Rat. 'Here, you with the lantern! Come over this way. I want to talk to you. Now, tell me, are there any shops open at this hour of the night?'

'Why, certainly, sir,' replied the field-mouse respectfully. 'At this time of the year our shops keep open to all sorts of hours.'

'Then look here!' said the Rat. 'You go off at once, you and your lantern, and you get me—'

Here much muttered conversation ensued, and the Mole only heard bits of it, such as—'Fresh, mind!—no, a pound of that will do—see you get Buggins's,* for I won't have any other—no, only the

best—if you can't get it there, try somewhere else—yes, of course, home-made, no tinned stuff—well then, do the best you can!' Finally, there was a chink of coin passing from paw to paw, the field-mouse was provided with an ample basket for his purchases, and off he hurried, he and his lantern.

The rest of the field-mice, perched in a row on the settle, their small legs swinging, gave themselves up to enjoyment of the fire, and toasted their chilblains till they tingled; while the Mole, failing to draw them into easy conversation, plunged into family history and made each of them recite the names of his numerous brothers, who were too young, it appeared, to be allowed to go out a-carolling this year, but looked forward very shortly to winning the parental consent.

The Rat, meanwhile, was busy examining the label on one of the beer-bottles. 'I perceive this to be Old Burton,'* he remarked approvingly. '*Sensible Mole!* The very thing! Now we shall be able to mull some ale!* Get the things ready, Mole, while I draw the corks.'

It did not take long to prepare the brew and thrust the tin heater well into the red heart of the fire; and soon every field-mouse was sipping and coughing and choking (for a little mulled ale goes a long way) and wiping his eyes and laughing and forgetting he had ever been cold in all his life.

'They act plays too, these fellows,' the Mole explained to the Rat. 'Make them up all by themselves, and act them afterwards. And very well they do it, too! They gave us a capital one last year, about a field-mouse who was captured at sea by a Barbary corsair,* and made to row in a galley; and when he escaped and got home again, his lady-love had gone into a convent. Here, *you!* You were in it, I remember. Get up and recite a bit.'

The field-mouse addressed got up on his legs, giggled shyly, looked round the room, and remained absolutely tongue-tied. His comrades cheered him on, Mole coaxed and encouraged him, and the Rat went so far as to take him by the shoulders and shake him; but nothing could overcome his stage-fright. They were all busily engaged on him like watermen applying the Royal Humane Society's regulations* to a case of long submersion, when the latch clicked, the door opened, and the field-mouse with the lantern reappeared, staggering under the weight of his basket.

There was no more talk of play-acting once the very real and solid

contents of the basket had been tumbled out on the table. Under the generalship of Rat, everybody was set to do something or to fetch something. In a very few minutes supper was ready, and Mole, as he took the head of the table in a sort of dream, saw a lately barren board set thick with savoury comforts; saw his little friends' faces brighten and beam as they fell to without delay; and then let himself loose—for he was famished indeed—on the provender so magically provided, thinking what a happy home-coming this had turned out, after all. As they ate, they talked of old times, and the field-mice gave him the local gossip up to date, and answered as well as they could the hundred questions he had to ask them. The Rat said little or nothing, only taking care that each guest had what he wanted, and plenty of it, and that Mole had no trouble or anxiety about anything.

They clattered off at last, very grateful and showering wishes of the season, with their jacket pockets stuffed with remembrances for the small brothers and sisters at home. When the door had closed on the last of them and the chink of the lanterns had died away, Mole and Rat kicked the fire up, drew their chairs in, brewed themselves a last nightcap of mulled ale, and discussed the events of the long day. At last the Rat, with a tremendous yawn, said, 'Mole, old chap, I'm ready to drop. Sleepy is simply not the word. That your own bunk over on that side? Very well, then, I'll take this. What a ripping little house this is! Everything so handy!'

He clambered into his bunk and rolled himself well up in the blankets, and slumber gathered him forthwith, as a swath of barley is folded into the arms of the reaping-machine.

The weary Mole also was glad to turn in without delay, and soon had his head on his pillow, in great joy and contentment. But ere he closed his eyes he let them wander round his old room, mellow in the glow of the firelight that played or rested on familiar and friendly things which had long been unconsciously a part of him, and now smilingly received him back, without rancour. He was now in just the frame of mind that the tactful Rat had quietly worked to bring about in him. He saw clearly how plain and simple—how narrow, even—it all was; but clearly, too, how much it all meant to him, and the special value of some such anchorage in one's existence. He did not at all want to abandon the new life and its splendid spaces, to turn his back on sun and air and all they offered him and creep home and stay there; the upper world was all too strong, it called to him still,

even down there, and he knew he must return to the larger stage. But it was good to think he had this to come back to, this place which was all his own, these things which were so glad to see him again and could always be counted upon for the same simple welcome.

MR. TOAD

It was a bright morning in the early part of summer; the river had resumed its wonted banks and its accustomed pace, and a hot sun seemed to be pulling everything green and bushy and spiky up out of the earth towards him, as if by strings. The Mole and the Water Rat had been up since dawn, very busy on matters connected with boats and the opening of the boating season; painting and varnishing, mending paddles, repairing cushions, hunting for missing boat-hooks and so on; and were finishing breakfast in their little parlour and eagerly discussing their plans for the day, when a heavy knock sounded at the door.

‘Bother!’ said the Rat, all over egg. ‘See who it is, Mole, like a good chap, since you’ve finished.’

The Mole went to attend the summons, and the Rat heard him utter a cry of surprise. Then he flung the parlour door open, and announced with much importance, ‘Mr. Badger!’

This was a wonderful thing, indeed, that the Badger should pay a formal call on them, or indeed on anybody. He generally had to be caught, if you wanted him badly, as he slipped quietly along a hedge-row of an early morning or a late evening, or else hunted up in his own house in the middle of the wood, which was a serious undertaking.

The Badger strode heavily into the room, and stood looking at the two animals with an expression full of seriousness. The Rat let his egg-spoon fall on the table-cloth, and sat open-mouthed.

‘The hour has come!’ said the Badger at last with great solemnity.

‘What hour?’ asked the Rat uneasily, glancing at the clock on the mantelpiece.

‘*Whose* hour, you should rather say,’ replied the Badger. ‘Why, Toad’s hour! The hour of Toad! I said I would take him in hand as soon as the winter was well over, and I’m going to take him in hand to-day!’

‘Toad’s hour, of course!’ cried the Mole delightedly. ‘Hooray! I remember now! *We’ll* teach him to be a sensible Toad!’

‘This very morning,’ continued the Badger, taking an arm-chair, ‘as I learnt last night from a trustworthy source, another new and

exceptionally powerful motor-car will arrive at Toad Hall on approval or return. At this very moment, perhaps, Toad is busily arraying himself in those singularly hideous habiliments so dear to him, which transform him from a (comparatively) good-looking Toad into an Object which throws any decent-minded animal that comes across it into a violent fit. We must be up and doing, ere it is too late. You two animals will accompany me instantly to Toad Hall, and the work of rescue shall be accomplished.'

'Right you are!' cried the Rat, starting up. 'We'll rescue the poor unhappy animal! We'll convert him! He'll be the most converted Toad that ever was before we've done with him!'

They set off up the road on their mission of mercy, Badger leading the way. Animals when in company walk in a proper and sensible manner, in single file, instead of sprawling all across the road and being of no use or support to each other in case of sudden trouble or danger.

They reached the carriage-drive of Toad Hall to find, as the Badger had anticipated, a shiny new motor-car, of great size, painted a bright red (Toad's favourite colour), standing in front of the house. As they neared the door it was flung open, and Mr. Toad, arrayed in goggles, cap, gaiters, and enormous overcoat, came swaggering down the steps, drawing on his gauntleted gloves.

'Hullo! come on, you fellows!' he cried cheerfully on catching sight of them. 'You're just in time to come with me for a jolly—to come for a jolly—for a—er—jolly—'

His hearty accents faltered and fell away as he noticed the stern unbending look on the countenances of his silent friends, and his invitation remained unfinished.

The Badger strode up the steps. 'Take him inside,' he said sternly to his companions. Then, as Toad was hustled through the door, struggling and protesting,* he turned to the *chauffeur* in charge of the new motor-car.

'I'm afraid you won't be wanted to-day,' he said. 'Mr. Toad has changed his mind. He will not require the car. Please understand that this is final. You needn't wait.' Then he followed the others inside and shut the door.

'Now, then!' he said to the Toad, when the four of them stood together in the hall, 'first of all, take those ridiculous things off!'

'Shan't!' replied Toad, with great spirit. 'What is the meaning of this gross outrage? I demand an instant explanation.'

'Take them off him, then, you two,' ordered the Badger briefly.

They had to lay Toad out on the floor, kicking and calling all sorts of names, before they could get to work properly. Then the Rat sat on him, and the Mole got his motor-clothes off him bit by bit, and they stood him up on his legs again. A good deal of his blustering spirit seemed to have evaporated with the removal of his fine panoply. Now that he was merely Toad, and no longer the Terror of the Highway, he giggled feebly and looked from one to the other appealingly, seeming quite to understand the situation.

'You knew it must come to this, sooner or later, Toad,' the Badger explained severely. 'You've disregarded all the warnings we've given you, you've gone on squandering the money your father left you, and you're getting us animals a bad name in the district by your furious driving and your smashes and your rows with the police. Independence is all very well, but we animals never allow our friends to make fools of themselves beyond a certain limit; and that limit you've reached. Now, you're a good fellow in many respects, and I don't want to be too hard on you. I'll make one more effort to bring you to reason. You will come with me into the smoking-room, and there you will hear some facts about yourself; and we'll see whether you come out of that room the same Toad that you went in.'

He took Toad firmly by the arm, led him into the smoking-room, and closed the door behind them.

'*That's* no good!' said the Rat contemptuously. '*Talking* to Toad'll never cure him. He'll *say* anything.'

They made themselves comfortable in arm-chairs and waited patiently. Through the closed door they could just hear the long continuous drone of the Badger's voice, rising and falling in waves of oratory; and presently they noticed that the sermon began to be punctuated at intervals by long-drawn sobs, evidently proceeding from the bosom of Toad, who was a soft-hearted and affectionate fellow, very easily converted—for the time being—to any point of view.

After some three-quarters of an hour the door opened, and the Badger reappeared, solemnly leading by the paw a very limp and dejected Toad. His skin hung baggily about him, his legs wobbled, and his cheeks were furrowed by the tears so plentifully called forth by the Badger's moving discourse.

'Sit down there, Toad,' said the Badger kindly, pointing to a chair. 'My friends,' he went on, 'I am pleased to inform you that Toad has

at last seen the error of his ways. He is truly sorry for his misguided conduct in the past, and he has undertaken to give up motor-cars entirely and for ever. I have his solemn promise to that effect.'

'That is very good news,' said the Mole gravely.

'Very good news, indeed,' observed the Rat dubiously, 'if only—*if only*—'

He was looking very hard at Toad as he said this, and could not help thinking he perceived something vaguely resembling a twinkle in that animal's still sorrowful eye.

'There's only one thing more to be done,' continued the gratified Badger. 'Toad, I want you solemnly to repeat, before your friends here, what you fully admitted to me in the smoking-room just now. First, you are sorry for what you've done, and you see the folly of it all?'

There was a long, long pause. Toad looked desperately this way and that, while the other animals waited in grave silence. At last he spoke.

'No!' he said a little sullenly, but stoutly; 'I'm *not* sorry. And it wasn't folly at all! It was simply glorious!'

'What?' cried the Badger, greatly scandalized. 'You backsliding animal, didn't you tell me just now, in *there*—'

'O, yes, yes, *in there*,' said Toad impatiently. 'I'd have said anything *in there*. You're so eloquent, dear Badger, and so moving, and so convincing, and put all your points so frightfully well—you can do what you like with me *in there*, and you know it. But I've been searching my mind since, and going over things in it, and I find that I'm not a bit sorry or repentant really, so it's no earthly good saying I am; now, is it?'

'Then you don't promise,' said the Badger, 'never to touch a motor-car again?'

'Certainly not!' replied Toad emphatically. 'On the contrary, I faithfully promise that the very first motor-car I see, poop-poop! off I go in it!'

'Told you so, didn't I?' observed the Rat to the Mole.

'Very well, then,' said the Badger firmly, rising to his feet. 'Since you won't yield to persuasion, we'll try what force can do. I feared it would come to this all along. You've often asked us three to come and stay with you, Toad, in this handsome house of yours; well, now we're going to. When we've converted you to a proper point of view we may quit, but not before. Take him upstairs, you two, and lock him up in his bedroom, while we arrange matters between ourselves.'

‘It’s for your own good, Toady, you know,’ said the Rat kindly, as Toad, kicking and struggling, was hauled up the stairs by his two faithful friends. ‘Think what fun we shall all have together, just as we used to, when you’ve quite got over this—this painful attack of yours!’

‘We’ll take great care of everything for you till you’re well, Toad,’ said the Mole; ‘and we’ll see your money isn’t wasted, as it has been.’

‘No more of those regrettable incidents with the police, Toad,’ said the Rat, as they thrust him into his bedroom.

‘And no more weeks in hospital, being ordered about by female nurses, Toad,’ added the Mole, turning the key on him.

They descended the stair, Toad shouting abuse at them through the keyhole; and the three friends then met in conference on the situation.

‘It’s going to be a tedious business,’ said the Badger, sighing. ‘I’ve never seen Toad so determined. However, we will see it out. He must never be left an instant unguarded. We shall have to take it in turns to be with him, till the poison has worked itself out of his system.’

They arranged watches accordingly. Each animal took it in turns to sleep in Toad’s room at night, and they divided the day up between them. At first Toad was undoubtedly very trying to his careful guardians. When his violent paroxysms possessed him he would arrange bedroom chairs in rude resemblance of a motor-car and would crouch on the foremost of them, bent forward and staring fixedly ahead, making uncouth and ghastly noises, till the climax was reached, when, turning a complete somersault, he would lie prostrate amidst the ruins of the chairs, apparently completely satisfied for the moment. As time passed, however, these painful seizures grew gradually less frequent, and his friends strove to divert his mind into fresh channels. But his interest in other matters did not seem to revive, and he grew apparently languid and depressed.

One fine morning the Rat, whose turn it was to go on duty, went upstairs to relieve Badger, whom he found fidgeting to be off and stretch his legs in a long ramble round his wood and down his earths and burrows. ‘Toad’s still in bed,’ he told the Rat, outside the door. ‘Can’t get much out of him, except, “O, leave him alone, he wants nothing, perhaps he’ll be better presently, it may pass off in time, don’t be unduly anxious,” and so on. Now, you look out, Rat!

When Toad's quiet and submissive, and playing at being the hero of a Sunday-school prize,* then he's at his artfullest. There's sure to be something up. I know him. Well, now I must be off.'

'How are you to-day, old chap?' inquired the Rat cheerfully, as he approached Toad's bedside.

He had to wait some minutes for an answer. At last a feeble voice replied, 'Thank you so much, dear Ratty! So good of you to inquire! But first tell me how you are yourself, and the excellent Mole?'

'O, *we're* all right,' replied the Rat. 'Mole,' he added incautiously, 'is going out for a run round with Badger. They'll be out till luncheon-time, so you and I will spend a pleasant morning together, and I'll do my best to amuse you. Now jump up, there's a good fellow, and don't lie moping there on a fine morning like this!'

'Dear, kind Rat,' murmured Toad, 'how little you realise my condition, and how very far I am from "jumping up" now—if ever! But do not trouble about me. I hate being a burden to my friends, and I do not expect to be one much longer. Indeed, I almost hope not.'

'Well, I hope not, too,' said the Rat heartily. 'You've been a fine bother to us all this time, and I'm glad to hear it's going to stop. And in weather like this, and the boating season just beginning! It's too bad of you, Toad! It isn't the trouble we mind, but you're making us miss such an awful lot.'

'I'm afraid it *is* the trouble you mind, though,' replied the Toad languidly. 'I can quite understand it. It's natural enough. You're tired of bothering about me. I mustn't ask you to do anything further. I'm a nuisance, I know.'

'You are, indeed,' said the Rat. 'But I tell you, I'd take any trouble on earth for you, if only you'd be a sensible animal.'

'If I thought that, Ratty,' murmured Toad, more feebly than ever, 'then I would beg you—for the last time, probably—to step round to the village as quickly as possible—even now it may be too late—and fetch the doctor. But don't you bother. It's only a trouble, and perhaps we may as well let things take their course.'

'Why, what do you want a doctor for?' inquired the Rat, coming closer and examining him. He certainly lay very still and flat, and his voice was weaker and his manner much changed.

'Surely you have noticed of late—' murmured Toad. 'But no—why should you? Noticing things is only a trouble. Tomorrow, indeed, you may be saying to yourself, "O, if only I had noticed sooner! If only

I had done something!" But no; it's a trouble. Never mind—forget that I asked.'

'Look here, old man,' said the Rat, beginning to get rather alarmed, 'of course I'll fetch a doctor to you, if you really think you want him. But you can hardly be bad enough for that yet. Let's talk about something else.'

'I fear, dear friend,' said Toad, with a sad smile, 'that "talk" can do little in a case like this—or doctors either, for that matter; still, one must grasp at the slightest straw. And, by the way—while you are about it—I *hate* to give you additional trouble, but I happen to remember that you will pass the door—would you mind at the same time asking the lawyer to step up? It would be a convenience to me, and there are moments—perhaps I should say there is *a* moment—when one must face disagreeable tasks, at whatever cost to exhausted nature!'

'A lawyer! O, he must be really bad!' the affrighted Rat said to himself, as he hurried from the room, not forgetting, however, to lock the door carefully behind him.

Outside, he stopped to consider. The other two were far away, and he had no one to consult.

'It's best to be on the safe side,' he said, on reflection. 'I've known Toad fancy himself frightfully bad before, without the slightest reason; but I've never heard him ask for a lawyer! If there's nothing really the matter, the doctor will tell him he's an old ass, and cheer him up; and that will be something gained. I'd better humour him and go; it won't take very long.' So he ran off to the village on his errand of mercy.

The Toad, who had hopped lightly out of bed as soon as he heard the key turned in the lock, watched him eagerly from the window till he disappeared down the carriage-drive. Then, laughing heartily, he dressed as quickly as possible in the smartest suit he could lay hands on at the moment, filled his pockets with cash which he took from a small drawer in the dressing-table, and next, knotting the sheets from his bed together and tying one end of the improvised rope round the central mullion of the handsome Tudor window which formed such a feature of his bedroom, he scrambled out, slid lightly to the ground,* and, taking the opposite direction to the Rat, marched off lightheartedly, whistling a merry tune.

It was a gloomy luncheon for Rat when the Badger and the Mole at length returned, and he had to face them at table with his pitiful and

unconvincing story. The Badger's caustic, not to say brutal, remarks may be imagined, and therefore passed over; but it was painful to the Rat that even the Mole, though he took his friend's side as far as possible, could not help saying, 'You've been a bit of a duffer this time, Ratty! Toad, too, of all animals!'

'He did it awfully well,' said the crestfallen Rat.

'He did *you* awfully well!' rejoined the Badger hotly. 'However, talking won't mend matters. He's got clear away for the time, that's certain; and the worst of it is, he'll be so conceited with what he'll think is his cleverness that he may commit any folly. One comfort is, we're free now, and needn't waste any more of our precious time doing sentry-go. But we'd better continue to sleep at Toad Hall for a while longer. Toad may be brought back at any moment—on a stretcher, or between two policemen.'

So spoke the Badger, not knowing what the future held in store, or how much water, and of how turbid a character, was to run under bridges before Toad should sit at ease again in his ancestral Hall.

Meanwhile, Toad, gay and irresponsible, was walking briskly along the high road, some miles from home. At first he had taken bypaths, and crossed many fields, and changed his course several times, in case of pursuit; but now, feeling by this time safe from recapture, and the sun smiling brightly on him, and all nature joining in a chorus of approval to the song of self-praise that his own heart was singing to him, he almost danced along the road in his satisfaction and conceit.

'Smart piece of work that!' he remarked to himself, chuckling. 'Brain against brute force—and brain came out on the top—as it's bound to do. Poor old Ratty! My! won't he catch it when the Badger gets back! A worthy fellow, Ratty, with many good qualities, but very little intelligence and absolutely no education. I must take him in hand some day, and see if I can make something of him.'

Filled full of conceited thoughts such as these he strode along, his head in the air, till he reached a little town, where the sign of 'The Red Lion',* swinging across the road half-way down the main street, reminded him that he had not breakfasted that day, and that he was exceedingly hungry after his long walk. He marched into the inn, ordered the best luncheon that could be provided at so short a notice, and sat down to eat it in the coffee-room.

He was about half-way through his meal when an only too familiar sound, approaching down the street, made him start and fall

a-trembling all over. The poop-poop! drew nearer and nearer, the car could be heard to turn into the inn-yard and come to a stop, and Toad had to hold on to the leg of the table* to conceal his overmastering emotion. Presently the party entered the coffee-room, hungry, talkative and gay, voluble on their experiences of the morning and the merits of the chariot that had brought them along so well. Toad listened eagerly, all ears, for a time; at last he could stand it no longer. He slipped out of the room quietly, paid his bill at the bar, and as soon as he got outside sauntered round quietly to the inn-yard. 'There cannot be any harm,' he said to himself, 'in my only just *looking* at it!'

The car stood in the middle of the yard, quite unattended, the stable-helps and other hangers-on being all at their dinner. Toad walked slowly round it, inspecting, criticising, musing deeply.

'I wonder,' he said to himself presently, 'I wonder if this sort of car *starts* easily?'

Next moment, hardly knowing how it came about, he found he had hold of the handle* and was turning it. As the familiar sound broke forth, the old passion seized on Toad and completely mastered him, body and soul. As if in a dream he found himself, somehow, seated in the driver's seat; as if in a dream, he pulled the lever and swung the car round the yard and out through the archway; and, as if in a dream, all sense of right and wrong, all fear of obvious consequences, seemed temporarily suspended. He increased his pace, and as the car devoured the street and leapt forth on the high road through the open country, he was only conscious that he was Toad once more, Toad at his best and highest, Toad the terror, the traffic-queller, the Lord of the lone trail, before whom all must give way or be smitten into nothingness and everlasting night.* He chanted as he flew, and the car responded with sonorous drone; the miles were eaten up under him as he sped he knew not whither, fulfilling his instincts, living his hour, reckless of what might come to him.

* * * * *

'To my mind,' observed the Chairman of the Bench of Magistrates cheerfully, 'the *only* difficulty that presents itself in this otherwise very clear case is, how we can make it sufficiently hot for the incorrigible rogue and hardened ruffian whom we see cowering in the dock before us. Let me see: he has been found guilty, on the clearest evidence, first, of stealing a valuable motor-car; secondly, of driving to

the public danger; and, thirdly, of gross impertinence to the rural police. Mr. Clerk, will you tell us, please, what is the very stiffest penalty we can impose for each of these offences? Without, of course, giving the prisoner the benefit of any doubt, because there isn't any.'

The Clerk scratched his nose with his pen. 'Some people would consider,' he observed, 'that stealing the motor-car was the worst offence; and so it is. But cheeking the police undoubtedly carries the severest penalty; and so it ought. Supposing you were to say twelve months for the theft, which is mild; and three years for the furious driving, which is lenient; and fifteen years for the cheek, which was pretty bad sort of cheek, judging by what we've heard from the witness-box, even if you only believe one-tenth part of what you heard, and I never believe more myself—those figures, if added together correctly, tot up to nineteen years—'

'First rate!' said the Chairman.

'—So you had better make it a round twenty years and be on the safe side,' concluded the Clerk.

'An excellent suggestion!' said the Chairman approvingly. 'Prisoner! Pull yourself together and try and stand up straight. It's going to be twenty years for you this time. And mind, if you appear before us again, upon any charge whatever, we shall have to deal with you very seriously!'

Then the brutal minions of the law fell upon the hapless Toad; loaded him with chains, and dragged him from the Court House,* shrieking, praying, protesting; across the market-place, where the playful populace, always as severe upon detected crime as they are sympathetic and helpful when one is merely 'wanted', assailed him with jeers, carrots, and popular catchwords; past hooting school children, their innocent faces lit up with the pleasure they ever derive from the sight of a gentleman in difficulties; across the hollow-sounding drawbridge, below the spiky portcullis, under the frowning archway of the grim old castle, whose ancient towers soared high overhead; past guardrooms full of grinning soldiery off duty, past sentries who coughed in a horrid sarcastic way, because that is as much as a sentry on his post dare do to show his contempt and abhorrence of crime; up time-worn winding stairs, past men-at-arms in casquet and corselet of steel, darting threatening looks through their vizards; across courtyards, where mastiffs strained at their leash and pawed the air to get at him; past ancient warders, their halberds leant

against the wall, dozing over a pasty and a flagon of brown ale; and on and on, past the rack-chamber and the thumbscrew-room, past the turning that led to the private scaffold, till they reached the door of the grimmest dungeon that lay in the heart of the innermost keep. There at last they paused, where an ancient gaoler sat fingering a bunch of mighty keys.

‘Oddsbodikins!’ said the sergeant of police, taking off his helmet and wiping his forehead. ‘Rouse thee, old loon, and take over from us this vile Toad, a criminal of deepest guilt and matchless artfulness and resource. Watch and ward him with all thy skill; and mark thee well, greybeard, should aught untoward befall, thy old head shall answer for his—and a murrain on both of them!’*

The gaoler nodded grimly, laying his withered hand on the shoulder of the miserable Toad. The rusty key creaked in the lock, the great door clanged behind them; and Toad was a helpless prisoner in the remotest dungeon of the best-guarded keep of the stoutest castle in all the length and breadth of Merry England.*

THE PIPER AT THE GATES OF DAWN*

THE Willow-Wren* was twittering his thin little song, hidden himself in the dark selvedge* of the river bank. Though it was past ten o'clock at night, the sky still clung to and retained some lingering skirts of light from the departed day; and the sullen heats of the torrid afternoon broke up and rolled away at the dispersing touch of the cool fingers of the short mid-summer night. Mole lay stretched on the bank, still panting from the stress of the fierce day that had been cloudless from dawn to late sunset, and waited for his friend to return. He had been on the river with some companions, leaving the Water Rat free to keep an engagement of long standing with Otter; and he had come back to find the house dark and deserted, and no sign of Rat, who was doubtless keeping it up late with his old comrade. It was still too hot to think of staying indoors, so he lay on some cool dock-leaves, and thought over the past day and its doings, and how very good they all had been.

The Rat's light footfall was presently heard approaching over the parched grass. 'O, the blessed coolness!' he said, and sat down, gazing thoughtfully into the river, silent and preoccupied.

'You stayed to supper, of course?' said the Mole presently.

'Simply had to,' said the Rat. 'They wouldn't hear of my going before. You know how kind they always are. And they made things as jolly for me as ever they could, right up to the moment I left. But I felt a brute all the time, as it was clear to me they were very unhappy, though they tried to hide it. Mole, I'm afraid they're in trouble. Little Portly* is missing again; and you know what a lot his father thinks of him, though he never says much about it.'

'What, that child?' said the Mole lightly. 'Well, suppose he is; why worry about it? He's always straying off and getting lost, and turning up again; he's so adventurous. But no harm ever happens to him. Everybody hereabouts knows him and likes him, just as they do old Otter, and you may be sure some animal or other will come across him and bring him back again all right. Why, we've found him ourselves, miles from home, and quite self-possessed and cheerful!'

'Yes; but this time it's more serious,' said the Rat gravely. 'He's been missing for some days now, and the Otters have hunted everywhere,

high and low, without finding the slightest trace. And they've asked every animal, too, for miles around, and no one knows anything about him. Otter's evidently more anxious than he'll admit. I got out of him that young Portly hasn't learnt to swim very well yet, and I can see he's thinking of the weir. There's a lot of water coming down still, considering the time of year, and the place always had a fascination for the child. And then there are—well, traps and things—you know. Otter's not the fellow to be nervous about any son of his before it's time. And now he *is* nervous. When I left, he came out with me—said he wanted some air, and talked about stretching his legs. But I could see it wasn't that, so I drew him out and pumped him, and got it all from him at last. He was going to spend the night watching by the ford. You know the place where the old ford used to be, in bygone days before they built the bridge?*

'I know it well,' said the Mole. 'But why should Otter choose to watch there?'

'Well, it seems that it was there he gave Portly his first swimming lesson,' continued the Rat. 'From that shallow, gravelly spit near the bank. And it was there he used to teach him fishing, and there young Portly caught his first fish, of which he was so very proud. The child loved the spot, and Otter thinks that if he came wandering back from wherever he is—if he *is* anywhere by this time, poor little chap—he might make for the ford he was so fond of; or if he came across it he'd remember it well, and stop there and play, perhaps. So Otter goes there every night and watches—on the chance, you know, just on the chance!'

They were silent for a time, both thinking of the same thing—the lonely, heart-sore animal, crouched by the ford, watching and waiting, the long night through—on the chance.

'Well, well,' said the Rat presently, 'I suppose we ought to be thinking about turning in.' But he never offered to move.

'Rat,' said the Mole, 'I simply can't go and turn in, and go to sleep, and *do* nothing, even though there doesn't seem to be anything to be done. We'll get the boat out, and paddle upstream. The moon will be up in an hour or so, and then we will search as well as we can—anyhow, it will be better than going to bed and doing *nothing*.'

'Just what I was thinking myself,' said the Rat. 'It's not the sort of night for bed anyhow; and daybreak is not so very far off, and then we may pick up some news of him from early risers as we go along.'

They got the boat out, and the Rat took the sculls, paddling with caution. Out in midstream there was a clear, narrow track that faintly reflected the sky; but wherever shadows fell on the water from bank, bush, or tree, they were as solid to all appearance as the banks themselves, and the Mole had to steer with judgment accordingly. Dark and deserted as it was, the night was full of small noises, song and chatter and rustling, telling of the busy little population who were up and about, plying their trades and vocations through the night till sunshine should fall on them at last and send them off to their well-earned repose. The water's own noises, too, were more apparent than by day, its gurglings and 'cloops' more unexpected and near at hand; and constantly they started at what seemed a sudden clear call from an actual articulate voice.

The line of the horizon was clear and hard against the sky, and in one particular quarter it showed black against a silvery climbing phosphorescence that grew and grew. At last, over the rim of the waiting earth the moon lifted with slow majesty till it swung clear of the horizon and rode off, free of moorings; and once more they began to see surfaces—meadows widespread, and quiet gardens, and the river itself from bank to bank, all softly disclosed, all washed clean of mystery and terror, all radiant again as by day, but with a difference that was tremendous. Their old haunts greeted them again in other raiment, as if they had slipped away and put on this pure new apparel and come quietly back, smiling as they shyly waited to see if they would be recognised again under it.

Fastening their boat to a willow, the friends landed in this silent, silver kingdom, and patiently explored the hedges, the hollow trees, the runnels and their little culverts, the ditches and dry water-ways. Embarking again and crossing over, they worked their way up the stream in this manner, while the moon, serene and detached in a cloudless sky, did what she could, though so far off, to help them in their quest; till her hour came and she sank earthwards reluctantly, and left them, and mystery once more held field and river.

Then a change began slowly to declare itself. The horizon became clearer, field and tree came more into sight, and somehow with a different look; the mystery began to drop away from them. A bird piped suddenly, and was still; and a light breeze sprang up and set the reeds and bulrushes rustling. Rat, who was in the stern of the boat, while Mole sculled, sat up suddenly and listened with a

passionate intentness. Mole, who with gentle strokes was just keeping the boat moving while he scanned the banks with care, looked at him with curiosity.

'It's gone!' sighed the Rat, sinking back in his seat again. 'So beautiful and strange and new! Since it was to end so soon, I almost wish I had never heard it. For it has roused a longing in me that is pain, and nothing seems worth while but just to hear that sound once more and go on listening to it for ever. No! There it is again!' he cried, alert once more. Entranced, he was silent for a long space, spellbound.

'Now it passes on and I begin to lose it,' he said presently. 'O, Mole! the beauty of it! The merry bubble and joy, the thin, clear happy call of the distant piping! Such music I never dreamed of, and the call in it is stronger even than the music is sweet! Row on, Mole, row! For the music and the call must be for us.'

The Mole, greatly wondering, obeyed. 'I hear nothing myself,' he said, 'but the wind playing in the reeds and rushes and osiers.'^{*}

The Rat never answered, if indeed he heard. Rapt, transported, trembling, he was possessed in all his senses by this new divine thing that caught up his helpless soul and swung and dandled it, a powerless but happy infant in a strong sustaining grasp.

In silence Mole rowed steadily, and soon they came to a point where the river divided, a long backwater branching off to one side. With a slight movement of his head Rat, who had long dropped the rudder-lines, directed the rower to take the backwater.* The creeping tide of light gained and gained, and now they could see the colour of the flowers that gemmed the water's edge.

'Clearer and nearer still,' cried the Rat joyously. 'Now you must surely hear it! Ah—at last—I see you do!'

Breathless and transfixed the Mole stopped rowing as the liquid run of that glad piping broke on him like a wave, caught him up, and possessed him utterly.* He saw the tears on his comrade's cheeks, and bowed his head and understood. For a space they hung there, brushed by the purple loosestrife that fringed the bank; then the clear imperious summons that marched hand-in-hand with the intoxicating melody imposed its will on Mole, and mechanically he bent to his oars again. And the light grew steadily stronger, but no birds sang as they were wont to do at the approach of dawn; and but for the heavenly music all was marvellously still.

On either side of them, as they glided onwards, the rich meadow-grass seemed that morning of a freshness and a greenness unsurpassable. Never had they noticed the roses so vivid, the willow-herb so riotous, the meadow-sweet so odorous and pervading. Then the murmur of the approaching weir began to hold the air, and they felt a consciousness that they were nearing the end, whatever it might be, that surely awaited their expedition.

A wide half-circle of foam and glinting lights and shining shoulders of green water, the great weir closed the backwater from bank to bank, troubled all the quiet surface with twirling eddies and floating foam-streaks, and deadened all other sounds with its solemn and soothing rumble. In midmost of the stream, embraced in the weir's shimmering arm-spread, a small island lay anchored, fringed close with willow and silver birch and alder. Reserved, shy, but full of significance, it hid whatever it might hold behind a veil, keeping it till the hour should come, and, with the hour, those who were called and chosen.*

Slowly, but with no doubt or hesitation whatever, and in something of a solemn expectancy, the two animals passed through the broken, tumultuous water and moored their boat at the flowery margin of the island. In silence they landed, and pushed through the blossom and scented herbage and undergrowth that led up to the level ground, till they stood on a little lawn of a marvellous green, set round with Nature's own orchard trees—crab-apple, wild cherry, and sloe.

'This is the place of my song-dream, the place the music played to me,' whispered the Rat, as if in a trance. 'Here, in this holy place, here if anywhere, surely we shall find Him!'

Then suddenly the Mole felt a great Awe fall upon him, an awe that turned his muscles to water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground. It was no panic terror—indeed he felt wonderfully at peace and happy—but it was an awe that smote and held him and, without seeing, he knew it could only mean that some august Presence was very, very near. With difficulty he turned to look for his friend, and saw him at his side cowed, stricken, and trembling violently. And still there was utter silence in the populous bird-haunted branches around them; and still the light grew and grew.

Perhaps he would never have dared to raise his eyes, but that, though the piping was now hushed, the call and the summons seemed still dominant and imperious. He might not refuse, were Death himself

waiting to strike him instantly, once he had looked with mortal eye on things rightly kept hidden. Trembling he obeyed, and raised his humble head; and then, in that utter clearness of the imminent dawn, while Nature, flushed with fullness of incredible colour, seemed to hold her breath for the event, he looked in the very eyes of the Friend and Helper; saw the backward sweep of the curved horns, gleaming in the growing daylight; saw the stern, hooked nose between the kindly eyes that were looking down on them humorously, while the bearded mouth broke into a half-smile at the corners; saw the rippling muscles on the arm that lay across the broad chest, the long supple hand still holding the pan-pipes only just fallen away from the parted lips; saw the splendid curves of the shaggy limbs disposed in majestic ease on the sward;* saw, last of all, nestling between his very hooves, sleeping soundly in utter peace and contentment, the little, round, podgy childish form of the baby otter. All this he saw, for one moment breathless and intense, vivid on the morning sky; and still, as he looked, he lived; and still, as he lived, he wondered.

‘Rat!’ he found breath to whisper, shaking. ‘Are you afraid?’

‘Afraid?’ murmured the Rat, his eyes shining with unutterable love. ‘Afraid! Of *Him*? O, never, never! And yet—and yet—O, Mole, I am afraid!’

Then the two animals, crouching to the earth, bowed their heads and did worship.*

Sudden and magnificent, the sun’s broad golden rim showed itself over the horizon facing them; and the first rays, shooting across the level water-meadows, took the animals full in the eyes and dazzled them. When they were able to look once more, the Vision had vanished, and the air was full of the carol of birds that hailed the dawn.

As they stared blankly, in dumb misery deepening as they slowly realised all they had seen and all they had lost, a capricious little breeze, dancing up from the surface of the water, tossed the aspens, shook the dewy roses, and blew lightly and caressingly in their faces; and with its soft touch came instant oblivion. For this is the last best gift that the kindly demigod is careful to bestow on those to whom he has revealed himself in their helping: the gift of forgetfulness. Lest the awful remembrance should remain and grow, and overshadow mirth and pleasure, and the great haunting memory should spoil all the after-lives of little animals helped out of difficulties, in order that they should be happy and lighthearted as before.

Mole rubbed his eyes and stared at Rat, who was looking about him in a puzzled sort of way. 'I beg your pardon; what did you say, Rat?' he asked.

'I think I was only remarking,' said Rat slowly, 'that this was the right sort of place, and that here, if anywhere, we should find him. And look! Why, there he is, the little fellow!' And with a cry of delight he ran towards the slumbering Portly.

But Mole stood still a moment, held in thought. As one wakened suddenly from a beautiful dream, who struggles to recall it, and can recapture nothing but a dim sense of the beauty of it, the beauty! Till that, too, fades away in its turn, and the dreamer bitterly accepts the hard, cold waking and all its penalties; so Mole, after struggling with his memory for a brief space, shook his head sadly and followed the Rat.

Portly woke up with a joyous squeak, and wriggled with pleasure at the sight of his father's friends, who had played with him so often in past days. In a moment, however, his face grew blank, and he fell to hunting round in a circle with pleading whine. As a child that has fallen happily asleep in its nurse's arms, and wakes to find itself alone and laid in a strange place, and searches corners and cupboards, and runs from room to room, despair growing silently in its heart, even so Portly searched the island and searched, dogged and unwearying, till at last the black moment came for giving it up, and sitting down and crying bitterly.

The Mole ran quickly to comfort the little animal; but Rat, lingering, looked long and doubtfully at certain hoof-marks deep in the sward.

'Some—great—animal—has been here,' he murmured slowly and thoughtfully; and stood musing, musing; his mind strangely stirred.

'Come along, Rat!' called the Mole. 'Think of poor Otter, waiting up there by the ford!'

Portly had soon been comforted by the promise of a treat—a jaunt on the river in Mr. Rat's real boat; and the two animals conducted him to the water's side, placed him securely between them in the bottom of the boat, and paddled off down the backwater. The sun was fully up by now, and hot on them, birds sang lustily and without restraint, and flowers smiled and nodded from either bank, but somehow—so thought the animals—with less of richness and blaze of colour than they seemed to remember seeing quite recently somewhere—they wondered where.

The main river reached again, they turned the boat's head upstream, towards the point where they knew their friend was keeping his lonely vigil. As they drew near the familiar ford, the Mole took the boat in to the bank, and they lifted Portly out and set him on his legs on the tow-path, gave him his marching orders and a friendly farewell pat on the back, and shoved out into midstream. They watched the little animal as he waddled along the path contentedly and with importance; watched him till they saw his muzzle suddenly lift and his waddle break into a clumsy amble as he quickened his pace with shrill whines and wriggles of recognition. Looking up the river, they could see Otter start up, tense and rigid, from out of the shallows where he crouched in dumb patience, and could hear his amazed and joyous bark as he bounded up through the osiers on to the path. Then the Mole, with a strong pull on one oar, swung the boat round and let the full stream bear them down again whither it would, their quest now happily ended.

'I feel strangely tired, Rat,' said the Mole, leaning wearily over his oars as the boat drifted. 'It's being up all night, you'll say, perhaps; but that's nothing. We do as much half the nights of the week, at this time of the year. No; I feel as if I had been through something very exciting and rather terrible, and it was just over; and yet nothing particular has happened.'

'Or something very surprising and splendid and beautiful,' murmured the Rat, leaning back and closing his eyes. 'I feel just as you do, Mole; simply dead tired, though not body-tired. It's lucky we've got the stream with us, to take us home. Isn't it jolly to feel the sun again, soaking into one's bones! And hark to the wind playing in the reeds!'

'It's like music—far-away music,' said the Mole, nodding drowsily.

'So I was thinking,' murmured the Rat, dreamful and languid. 'Dance-music—the lilting sort that runs on without a stop—but with words in it, too—it passes into words and out of them again—I catch them at intervals—then it is dance-music once more, and then nothing but the reeds' soft thin whispering.'

'You hear better than I,' said the Mole sadly. 'I cannot catch the words.'

'Let me try and give you them,' said the Rat softly, his eyes still closed. 'Now it is turning into words again—faint but clear—*Lest the awe should dwell—And turn your frolic to fret—You shall look on my*

power at the helping hour—But then you shall forget! Now the reeds take it up—*forget, forget*, they sigh, and it dies away* in a rustle and a whisper. Then the voice returns—

‘Lest limbs be reddened and rent—I spring the trap that is set—As I loose the snare you may glimpse me there—For surely you shall forget! Row nearer, Mole, nearer to the reeds! It is hard to catch, and grows each minute fainter.

‘Helper and healer, I cheer—Small waifs in the woodland met—Strays I find in it, wounds I bind in it—Bidding them all forget! Nearer, Mole, nearer! No, it is no good; the song has died away into reed-talk.’

‘But what do the words mean?’ asked the wondering Mole.

‘That I do not know,’ said the Rat simply. ‘I passed them on to you as they reached me. Ah! now they return again, and this time full and clear! This time, at last, it is the real, the unmistakable thing, simple—passionate—perfect—’

‘Well, let’s have it, then,’ said the Mole, after he had waited patiently for a few minutes, half dozing in the hot sun.

But no answer came. He looked, and understood the silence. With a smile of much happiness on his face, and something of a listening look still lingering there, the weary Rat was fast asleep.

TOAD'S ADVENTURES*

WHEN Toad found himself immured in a dank and noisome dungeon, and knew that all the grim darkness of a medieval fortress lay between him and the outer world of sunshine and well-metalled high roads where he had lately been so happy, disporting himself as if he had bought up every road in England, he flung himself at full length on the floor, and shed bitter tears, and abandoned himself to dark despair.* 'This is the end of everything' (he said), 'at least it is the end of the career of Toad, which is the same thing; the popular and handsome Toad, the rich and hospitable Toad, the Toad so free and careless and debonair! How can I hope to be ever set at large again' (he said), 'who have been imprisoned so justly for stealing so handsome a motor-car in such an audacious manner, and for such lurid and imaginative cheek, bestowed upon such a number of fat, red-faced policemen!' (Here his sobs choked him.) 'Stupid animal that I was' (he said), 'now I must languish in this dungeon, till people who were proud to say they knew me, have forgotten the very name of Toad! O wise old Badger' (he said), 'O clever, intelligent Rat and sensible Mole! What sound judgments, what a knowledge of men and matters you possess! O unhappy and forsaken Toad!' With lamentations such as these he passed his days and nights for several weeks, refusing his meals or intermediate light refreshments, though the grim and ancient gaoler, knowing that Toad's pockets were well lined, frequently pointed out that many comforts, and indeed luxuries, could by arrangement be sent in—at a price—from outside.

Now the gaoler had a daughter, a pleasant wench and good-hearted, who assisted her father in the lighter duties of his post. She was particularly fond of animals, and, besides her canary, whose cage hung on a nail in the massive wall of the keep by day, to the great annoyance of prisoners who relished an after-dinner nap, and was shrouded in an antimacassar on the parlour table at night, she kept several piebald mice and a restless revolving squirrel. This kind-hearted girl, pitying the misery of Toad, said to her father one day, 'Father! I can't bear to see that poor beast so unhappy, and getting so thin! You let me have the managing of him. You know how fond of animals I am. I'll make him eat from my hand, and sit up, and do all sorts of things.'

Her father replied that she could do what she liked with him. He was tired of Toad, and his sulks and his airs and his meanness. So that day she went on her errand of mercy, and knocked at the door of Toad's cell.

'Now, cheer up, Toad,' she said coaxingly, on entering, 'and sit up and dry your eyes and be a sensible animal. And do try and eat a bit of dinner. See, I've brought you some of mine, hot from the oven!'

It was bubble-and-squeak, between two plates, and its fragrance filled the narrow cell. The penetrating smell of cabbage reached the nose of Toad as he lay prostrate in his misery on the floor, and gave him the idea for a moment that perhaps life was not such a blank and desperate thing as he had imagined. But still he wailed, and kicked with his legs, and refused to be comforted. So the wise girl retired for the time, but, of course, a good deal of the smell of hot cabbage remained behind, as it will do, and Toad, between his sobs, sniffed and reflected, and gradually began to think new and inspiring thoughts: of chivalry, and poetry, and deeds still to be done; of broad meadows, and cattle browsing in them, raked by the sun and wind; of kitchen-gardens, and straight herb-borders, and warm snap-dragons beset by bees; and of the comforting clink of dishes set down on the table at Toad Hall, and the scrape of chair-legs on the floor as every one pulled himself close up to his work. The air of the narrow cell took on a rosy tinge; he began to think of his friends, and how they would surely be able to do something; of lawyers, and how they would have enjoyed his case, and what an ass he had been not to get in a few; and lastly, he thought of his own great cleverness and resource, and all that he was capable of if he only gave his great mind to it; and the cure was almost complete.

When the girl returned, some hours later, she carried a tray, with a cup of fragrant tea steaming on it; and a plate piled up with very hot buttered toast, cut thick, very brown on both sides, with the butter running through the holes in it in great golden drops, like honey from the honeycomb. The smell of that buttered toast simply talked to Toad, and with no uncertain voice; talked of warm kitchens, of breakfasts on bright frosty mornings, of cosy parlour firesides on winter evenings, when one's ramble was over and slippers feet were propped on the fender; and the purring of contented cats, and the twitter of sleepy canaries. Toad sat up on end once more, dried his eyes, sipped his tea and munched his toast, and soon began

talking freely about himself, and the house he lived in, and his doings there, and how important he was, and what a lot his friends thought of him.

The gaoler's daughter saw that the topic was doing him as much good as the tea, as indeed it was, and encouraged him to go on.

'Tell me about Toad Hall,' she said. 'It sounds beautiful.'

'Toad Hall,' said the Toad proudly, 'is an eligible self-contained gentleman's residence, very unique; dating in part from the fourteenth century, but replete with every modern convenience. Up-to-date sanitation. Five minutes from church, post office, and golf-links. Suitable for—'

'Bless the animal,' said the girl, laughing, 'I don't want to *take* it. Tell me something *real* about it. But first wait till I fetch you some more tea and toast.'

She tripped away, and presently returned with a fresh trayful; and Toad, pitching into the toast with avidity, his spirits quite restored to their usual level, told her about the boat-house, and the fish-pond, and the old walled kitchen-garden; and about the pig-styes, and the stables, and the pigeon-house, and the hen-house; and about the dairy, and the wash-house, and the china-cupboards, and the linen-presses* (she liked that bit especially); and about the banqueting hall, and the fun they had there when the other animals were gathered round the table and Toad was at his best, singing songs, telling stories, carrying on generally. Then she wanted to know about his animal-friends, and was very interested in all he had to tell her about them and how they lived, and what they did to pass their time. Of course, she did not say she was fond of animals as *pets*, because she had the sense to see that Toad would be extremely offended. When she said good night, having filled his water-jug and shaken up his straw for him, Toad was very much the same sanguine, self-satisfied animal that he had been of old. He sang a little song or two, of the sort he used to sing at his dinner-parties, curled himself up in the straw, and had an excellent night's rest and the pleasantest of dreams.

They had many interesting talks together, after that, as the dreary days went on; and the gaoler's daughter grew very sorry for Toad, and thought it a great shame that a poor little animal should be locked up in prison for what seemed to her a very trivial offence. Toad, of course, in his vanity, thought that her interest in him proceeded from a growing tenderness; and he could not help half regretting that the social

gulf between them was so very wide, for she was a comely lass, and evidently admired him very much.

One morning the girl was very thoughtful, and answered at random, and did not seem to Toad to be paying proper attention to his witty sayings and sparkling comments.

‘Toad,’ she said presently, ‘just listen, please. I have an aunt who is a washerwoman.’

‘There, there,’ said Toad graciously and affably, ‘never mind; think no more about it. *I* have several aunts who *ought* to be washerwomen.’

‘Do be quiet a minute, Toad,’ said the girl. ‘You talk too much, that’s your chief fault, and I’m trying to think, and you hurt my head. As I said, I have an aunt who is a washerwoman; she does washing for all the prisoners in this castle—we try to keep any paying business of that sort in the family, you understand. She takes out the washing on Monday morning, and brings it in on Friday evening. This is a Thursday. Now, this is what occurs to me: you’re very rich—at least you’re always telling me so—and she’s very poor. A few pounds wouldn’t make any difference to you, and it would mean a lot to her. Now, I think if she were properly approached—squared, I believe, is the word you animals use—you could come to some arrangement by which she would let you have her dress and bonnet and so on, and you could escape from the castle as the official washerwoman. You’re very alike in many respects—particularly about the figure.’

‘We’re *not*,’ said the Toad in a huff. ‘I have a very elegant figure—for what I am.’

‘So has my aunt,’ replied the girl, ‘for what *she* is. But have it your own way. You horrid, proud ungrateful animal, when I’m sorry for you, and trying to help you!’

‘Yes, yes, that’s all right; thank you very much indeed,’ said the Toad hurriedly. ‘But look here! you wouldn’t surely have Mr. Toad, of Toad Hall, going about the country disguised as a washerwoman!’

‘Then you can stop here as a Toad,’ replied the girl with much spirit. ‘I suppose you want to go off in a coach-and-four!’

Honest Toad was always ready to admit himself in the wrong. ‘You are a good, kind, clever girl,’ he said, ‘and I am indeed a proud and a stupid toad. Introduce me to your worthy aunt, if you will be so kind, and I have no doubt that the excellent lady and I will be able to arrange terms satisfactory to both parties.’*

Next evening the girl ushered her aunt into Toad's cell, bearing his week's washing pinned up in a towel. The old lady had been prepared beforehand for the interview, and the sight of certain gold sovereigns that Toad had thoughtfully placed on the table in full view practically completed the matter and left little further to discuss. In return for his cash, Toad received a cotton print gown, an apron, a shawl, and a rusty* black bonnet; the only stipulation the old lady made being that she should be gagged and bound and dumped down in a corner. By this not very convincing artifice, she explained, aided by picturesque fiction which she could supply herself, she hoped to retain her situation, in spite of the suspicious appearance of things.

Toad was delighted with the suggestion. It would enable him to leave the prison in some style, and with his reputation for being a desperate and dangerous fellow untarnished; and he readily helped the gaoler's daughter to make her aunt appear as much as possible the victim of circumstances over which she had no control.*

'Now it's your turn, Toad,' said the girl. 'Take off that coat and waistcoat of yours; you're fat enough as it is.'

Shaking with laughter, she proceeded to 'hook-and-eye' him into the cotton print gown, arranged the shawl with a professional fold, and tied the strings of the rusty bonnet under his chin.

'You're the very image of her,' she giggled, 'only I'm sure you never looked half so respectable in all your life before. Now, good-bye, Toad, and good luck. Go straight down the way you came up; and if any one says anything to you, as they probably will, being but men, you can chaff back a bit, of course, but remember you're a widow woman, quite alone in the world, with a character to lose.'

With a quaking heart, but as firm a footstep as he could command, Toad set forth cautiously on what seemed to be a most hare-brained and hazardous undertaking; but he was soon agreeably surprised to find how easy everything was made for him, and a little humbled at the thought that both his popularity, and the sex that seemed to inspire it, were really another's. The washerwoman's squat figure in its familiar cotton print seemed a passport for every barred door and grim gateway; even when he hesitated, uncertain as to the right turning to take, he found himself helped out of his difficulty by the warder at the next gate, anxious to be off to his tea, summoning him to come along sharp and not keep him waiting there all night. The chaff and the humorous sallies to which he was subjected, and to

which, of course, he had to provide prompt and effective reply, formed, indeed, his chief danger; for Toad was an animal with a strong sense of his own dignity, and the chaff was mostly (he thought) poor and clumsy, and the humour of the sallies entirely lacking. However, he kept his temper, though with great difficulty, suited his retorts to his company and his supposed character, and did his best not to overstep the limits of good taste.

It seemed hours before he crossed the last courtyard, rejected the pressing invitations from the last guardroom, and dodged the outspread arms of the last warder, pleading with simulated passion for just one farewell embrace. But at last he heard the wicket-gate in the great outer door click behind him, felt the fresh air of the outer world upon his anxious brow, and knew that he was free!*

Dizzy with the easy success of his daring exploit, he walked quickly towards the lights of the town, not knowing in the least what he should do next, only quite certain of one thing, that he must remove himself as quickly as possible from a neighbourhood where the lady he was forced to represent was so well-known and so popular a character.

As he walked along, considering, his attention was caught by some red and green lights a little way off, to one side of the town, and the sound of the puffing and snorting of engines and the banging of shunted trucks fell on his ear. 'Aha!' he thought, 'this is a piece of luck! A railway-station is the thing I want most in the whole world at this moment; and what's more, I needn't go through the town to get to it, and shan't have to support this humiliating character by repar-tees which, though thoroughly effective, do not assist one's sense of self-respect.'

He made his way to the station accordingly, consulted a time-table, and found that a train, bound more or less in the direction of his home, was due to start in half an hour. 'More luck!' said Toad, his spirits rising rapidly, and went off to the booking-office to buy his ticket.

He gave the name of the station that he knew to be nearest to the village of which Toad Hall was the principal feature, and mechanically put his fingers, in search of the necessary money, where his waist-coat pocket should have been. But here the cotton gown, which had nobly stood by him so far, and which he had basely forgotten, intervened, and frustrated his efforts. In a sort of nightmare he struggled with the strange uncanny thing that seemed to hold his hands, turn all muscular strivings to water, and laugh at him all the time; while other

travellers, forming up in a line behind, waited with impatience, making suggestions of more or less value and comments of more or less stringency and point. At last—somehow—he never rightly understood how—he burst the barriers, attained the goal, arrived at where all waistcoat pockets are eternally situated, and found—not only no money, but no pocket to hold it, and no waistcoat to hold the pocket!

To his horror he recollected that he had left both coat and waistcoat behind him in his cell, and with them his pocket-book,* money, keys, watch, matches, pencil-case—all that makes life worth living, all that distinguishes the many-pocketed animal, the lord of creation, from the inferior one-pocketed or no-pocketed productions that hop or trip about permissively, unequipped for the real contest.

In his misery he made one desperate effort to carry the thing off, and, with a return to his fine old manner—a blend of the Squire and the College Don—he said, ‘Look here! I find I’ve left my purse behind. Just give me that ticket, will you, and I’ll send the money on to-morrow. I’m well known in these parts.’

The clerk stared at him and the rusty black bonnet a moment, and then laughed. ‘I should think you were pretty well known in these parts,’ he said, ‘if you’ve tried this game on often. Here, stand away from the window, please, madam; you’re obstructing the other passengers!’

An old gentleman who had been prodding him in the back for some moments here thrust him away, and, what was worse, addressed him as his good woman, which angered Toad more than anything that had occurred that evening.

Baffled and full of despair, he wandered blindly down the platform where the train was standing, and tears trickled down each side of his nose. It was hard, he thought, to be within sight of safety and almost of home, and to be baulked by the want of a few wretched shillings and by the pettifogging mistrustfulness of paid officials. Very soon his escape would be discovered, the hunt would be up, he would be caught, reviled, loaded with chains, dragged back again to prison, and bread-and-water and straw; his guards and penalties would be doubled; and O, what sarcastic remarks the girl would make! What was to be done? He was not swift of foot; his figure was unfortunately recognisable. Could he not squeeze under the seat of a carriage? He had seen this method adopted by schoolboys, when the journey-money

provided by thoughtful parents had been diverted to other and better ends. As he pondered, he found himself opposite the engine, which was being oiled, wiped, and generally caressed by its affectionate driver, a burly man with an oil-can in one hand and a lump of cotton-waste in the other.

'Hullo, mother!' said the engine-driver, 'what's the trouble? You don't look particularly cheerful.'

'O, sir!' said Toad, crying afresh, 'I am a poor unhappy washerwoman, and I've lost all my money, and can't pay for a ticket, and I *must* get home tonight somehow, and whatever I am to do I don't know. O dear, O dear!'

'That's a bad business, indeed,' said the engine-driver reflectively. 'Lost your money—and can't get home—and got some kids, too, waiting for you, I dare say?'

'Any amount of 'em,' sobbed Toad. 'And they'll be hungry—and playing with matches—and upsetting lamps, the little innocents!—and quarrelling, and going on generally. O dear, O dear!'

'Well, I'll tell you what I'll do,' said the good engine-driver. 'You're a washerwoman to your trade, says you. Very well, that's that. And I'm an engine-driver, as you well may see, and there's no denying it's terribly dirty work. Uses up a power of shirts, it does, till my missus is fair tired of washing of 'em. If you'll wash a few shirts for me when you get home, and send 'em along, I'll give you a ride on my engine. It's against the Company's regulations, but we're not so very particular in these out-of-the-way parts.'

The Toad's misery turned into rapture as he eagerly scrambled up into the cab of the engine. Of course, he had never washed a shirt in his life, and couldn't if he tried and, anyhow, he wasn't going to begin; but he thought: 'When I get safely home to Toad Hall, and have money again, and pockets to put it in, I will send the engine-driver enough to pay for quite a quantity of washing, and that will be the same thing, or better.'

The guard waved his welcome flag, the engine-driver whistled in cheerful response, and the train moved out of the station. As the speed increased, and the Toad could see on either side of him real fields, and trees, and hedges, and cows, and horses, all flying past him,* and as he thought how every minute was bringing him nearer to Toad Hall, and sympathetic friends, and money to chink in his pocket, and a soft bed to sleep in, and good things to eat, and praise

and admiration at the recital of his adventures and his surpassing cleverness, he began to skip up and down and shout and sing snatches of song, to the great astonishment of the engine-driver, who had come across washerwomen before, at long intervals, but never one at all like this.

They had covered many and many a mile, and Toad was already considering what he would have for supper as soon as he got home, when he noticed that the engine-driver, with a puzzled expression on his face, was leaning over the side of the engine and listening hard. Then he saw him climb on to the coals and gaze out over the top of the train; then he returned and said to Toad: 'It's very strange; we're the last train running in this direction to-night, yet I could be sworn that I heard another following us!'

Toad ceased his frivolous antics at once. He became grave and depressed, and a dull pain in the lower part of his spine, communicating itself to his legs, made him want to sit down and try desperately not to think of all the possibilities.

By this time the moon was shining brightly, and the engine-driver, steadying himself on the coal, could command a view of the line behind them for a long distance.

Presently he called out, 'I can see it clearly now! It is an engine, on our rails, coming along at a great pace! It looks as if we were being pursued!'

The miserable Toad, crouching in the coal-dust, tried hard to think of something to do, with dismal want of success.

'They are gaining on us fast!' cried the engine-driver. 'And the engine is crowded with the queerest lot of people! Men like ancient warders, waving halberds; policemen in their helmets, waving truncheons; and shabbily dressed men in pot-hats,* obvious and unmistakable plain-clothes detectives even at this distance, waving revolvers and walking-sticks; all waving, and all shouting the same thing—"Stop, stop, stop!"'

Then Toad fell on his knees among the coals and, raising his clasped paws in supplication, cried, 'Save me, only save me, dear kind Mr. Engine-driver, and I will confess everything! I am not the simple washerwoman I seem to be! I have no children waiting for me, innocent or otherwise! I am a toad—the well-known and popular Mr. Toad, a landed proprietor; I have just escaped, by my great daring and cleverness, from a loathsome dungeon into which my enemies had

flung me; and if those fellows on that engine recapture me, it will be chains and bread-and-water and straw and misery once more for poor, unhappy, innocent Toad!

The engine-driver looked down upon him very sternly, and said, 'Now tell the truth; what were you put in prison for?'

'It was nothing very much,' said poor Toad, colouring deeply. 'I only borrowed a motor-car while the owners were at lunch; they had no need of it at the time. I didn't mean to steal it, really; but people—especially magistrates—take such harsh views of thoughtless and high-spirited actions.'

The engine-driver looked very grave and said, 'I fear that you have been indeed a wicked toad, and by rights I ought to give you up to offended justice. But you are evidently in sore trouble and distress, so I will not desert you. I don't hold with motor-cars, for one thing; and I don't hold with being ordered about by policemen when I'm on my own engine, for another. And the sight of an animal in tears always makes me feel queer and soft-hearted. So cheer up, Toad! I'll do my best, and we may beat them yet!'

They piled on more coals,* shovelling furiously; the furnace roared, the sparks flew, the engine leapt and swung, but still their pursuers slowly gained. The engine-driver, with a sigh, wiped his brow with a handful of cotton-waste, and said, 'I'm afraid it's no good, Toad. You see, they are running light,* and they have the better engine. There's just one thing left for us to do, and it's your only chance, so attend very carefully to what I tell you. A short way ahead of us is a long tunnel, and on the other side of that the line passes through a thick wood. Now, I will put on all the speed I can while we are running through the tunnel, but the other fellows will slow down a bit, naturally, for fear of an accident. When we are through, I will shut off steam and put on brakes as hard as I can, and the moment it's safe to do so you must jump and hide in the wood, before they get through the tunnel and see you. Then I will go full speed ahead again, and they can chase *me* if they like, for as long as they like, and as far as they like. Now mind and be ready to jump when I tell you!'

They piled on more coals, and the train shot into the tunnel, and the engine rushed and roared and rattled, till at last they shot out at the other end into fresh air and the peaceful moonlight, and saw the wood lying dark and helpful upon either side of the line. The driver shut off steam and put on brakes, the Toad got down on the step, and

as the train slowed down to almost a walking pace he heard the driver call out, 'Now, jump!'

Toad jumped, rolled down a short embankment, picked himself up unhurt, scrambled into the wood and hid.

Peeping out, he saw his train get up speed again and disappear at a great pace. Then out of the tunnel burst the pursuing engine, roaring and whistling, her motley crew waving their various weapons and shouting, 'Stop! stop! stop!' When they were past, the Toad had a hearty laugh—for the first time since he was thrown into prison.

But he soon stopped laughing when he came to consider that it was now very late and dark and cold, and he was in an unknown wood, with no money and no chance of supper, and still far from friends and home; and the dead silence of everything, after the roar and rattle of the train, was something of a shock. He dared not leave the shelter of the trees, so he struck into the wood, with the idea of leaving the railway as far as possible behind him.

After so many weeks within walls, he found the wood strange and unfriendly and inclined, he thought, to make fun of him. Night-jars, sounding their mechanical rattle, made him think that the wood was full of searching warders, closing in on him. An owl, swooping noiselessly towards him, brushed his shoulder with its wing, making him jump with the horrid certainty that it was a hand; then flitted off, moth-like, laughing its low ho! ho! ho! which Toad thought in very poor taste. Once he met a fox, who stopped, looked him up and down in a sarcastic sort of way, and said, 'Hullo, washerwoman! Half a pair of socks and a pillow-case short this week! Mind it doesn't occur again!' and swaggered off, sniggering. Toad looked about for a stone to throw at him, but could not succeed in finding one, which vexed him more than anything. At last, cold, hungry, and tired out, he sought the shelter of a hollow tree, where with branches and dead leaves he made himself as comfortable a bed as he could, and slept soundly till the morning.

WAYFARERS ALL*

THE Water Rat was restless, and he did not exactly know why. To all appearance the summer's pomp was still at fullest height, and although in the tilled acres green had given way to gold, though rowans were reddening, and the woods were dashed here and there with a tawny fierceness, yet light and warmth and colour were still present in undiminished measure, clean of any chilly premonitions of the passing year. But the constant chorus of the orchards and hedges had shrunk to a casual evensong from a few yet unwearied performers; the robin was beginning to assert himself once more; and there was a feeling in the air of change and departure. The cuckoo, of course, had long been silent; but many another feathered friend, for months a part of the familiar landscape and its small society, was missing too, and it seemed that the ranks thinned steadily day by day. Rat, ever observant of all winged movement, saw that it was taking daily a southing tendency; and even as he lay in bed at night he thought he could make out, passing in the darkness overhead, the beat and quiver of impatient pinions, obedient to the preemptory call.

Nature's Grand Hotel has its Season, like the others. As the guests one by one pack, pay, and depart, and the seats at the *table-d'hôte* shrink pitifully at each succeeding meal; as suites of rooms are closed, carpets taken up, and waiters sent away; those boarders who are staying on, *en pension*,* until the next year's full reopening, cannot help being somewhat affected by all these flittings and farewells, this eager discussion of plans, routes, and fresh quarters, this daily shrinkage in the stream of comradeship. One gets unsettled, depressed, and inclined to be querulous. Why this craving for change? Why not stay on quietly here, like us, and be jolly? You don't know this hotel out of the season, and what fun we have among ourselves, we fellows who remain and see the whole interesting year out. All very true, no doubt, the others always reply; we quite envy you—and some other year perhaps—but just now we have engagements—and there's the bus at the door—our time is up! So they depart, with a smile and a nod, and we miss them, and feel resentful. The Rat was a self-sufficing sort of animal, rooted to the land, and, whoever went, he stayed; still, he

could not help noticing what was in the air, and feeling some of its influence in his bones.

It was difficult to settle down to anything seriously, with all this flitting going on. Leaving the water-side, where rushes stood thick and tall in a stream that was becoming sluggish and low, he wandered country-wards, crossed a field or two of pasturage already looking dusty and parched, and thrust into the great realm of wheat, yellow, wavy, and murmurous, full of quiet motion and small whisperings. Here he often loved to wander, through the forest of stiff strong stalks that carried their own golden sky away over his head*—a sky that was always dancing, shimmering, softly talking; or swaying strongly to the passing wind and recovering itself with a toss and a merry laugh. Here, too, he had many small friends, a society complete in itself, leading full and busy lives, but always with a spare moment to gossip and exchange news with a visitor. To-day, however, though they were civil enough, the field-mice and harvest-mice seemed preoccupied. Many were digging and tunnelling busily; others, gathered together in small groups, examined plans and drawings of small flats, stated to be desirable and compact, and situated conveniently near the Stores. Some were hauling out dusty trunks and dress-baskets, others were already elbow-deep packing their belongings; while everywhere piles and bundles of wheat, oats, barley, beech-mast* and nuts, lay about ready for transport.

‘Here’s old Ratty!’ they cried as soon as they saw him. ‘Come and bear a hand, Rat, and don’t stand about idle!’

‘What sort of games are you up to?’ said the Water Rat severely. ‘You know it isn’t time to be thinking of winter quarters yet, by a long way!’

‘O yes, we know that,’ explained a field-mouse rather shamefacedly; ‘but it’s always as well to be in good time, isn’t it? We really *must* get all the furniture and baggage and stores moved out of this before those horrid machines begin clicking round the fields; and then, you know, the best flats get picked up so quickly nowadays, and if you’re late you have to put up with *anything*; and they want such a lot of doing up, too, before they’re fit to move into. Of course, we’re early, we know that; but we’re only just making a start.’

‘O, bother *starts*,’ said the Rat. ‘It’s a splendid day. Come for a row, or a stroll along the hedges, or a picnic in the woods, or something.’

'Well, I *think* not *to-day*, thank you,' replied the field-mouse hurriedly. 'Perhaps some *other* day—when we've more *time*—'

The Rat, with a snort of contempt, swung round to go, tripped over a hat-box, and fell, with undignified remarks.

'If people would be more careful,' said a field-mouse rather stiffly, 'and look where they're going, people wouldn't hurt themselves—and forget themselves. Mind that hold-all, Rat! You'd better sit down somewhere. In an hour or two we may be more free to attend to you.'

'You won't be "free," as you call it, much this side of Christmas, I can see that,' retorted the Rat grumpily, as he picked his way out of the field.

He returned somewhat despondently to his river again—his faithful, steady-going old river, which never packed up, flitted, or went into winter quarters.

In the osiers which fringed the bank he spied a swallow sitting. Presently it was joined by another, and then by a third; and the birds, fidgiting restlessly on their bough, talked together earnestly and low.*

'What, *already*?' said the Rat, strolling up to them. 'What's the hurry? I call it simply ridiculous.'

'O, we're not off yet, if that's what you mean,' replied the first swallow. 'We're only making plans and arranging things. Talking it over, you know—what route we're taking this year, and where we'll stop, and so on. That's half the fun!'

'Fun?' said the Rat; 'now that's just what I don't understand. If you've *got* to leave this pleasant place, and your friends who will miss you, and your snug homes that you've just settled into, why, when the hour strikes I've no doubt you'll go bravely, and face all the trouble and discomfort and change and newness, and make believe that you're not very unhappy. But to want to talk about it, or even think about it, till you really need—'

'No, you don't understand, naturally,' said the second swallow. 'First, we feel it stirring within us, a sweet unrest; then back come the recollections one by one, like homing pigeons. They flutter through our dreams at night, they fly with us in our wheelings and circlings by day. We hunger to inquire of each other, to compare notes and assure ourselves that it was all really true, as one by one the scents and sounds and names of long-forgotten places come gradually back and beckon to us.'

‘Couldn’t you stop on for just this year?’ suggested the Water Rat wistfully. ‘We’ll all do our best to make you feel at home. You’ve no idea what good times we have here, while you are far away.’

‘I tried “stopping on” one year,’ said the third swallow. ‘I had grown so fond of the place that when the time came I hung back and let the others go on without me. For a few weeks it was all well enough, but afterwards, O the weary length of the nights! The shivering, sunless days! The air so clammy and chill, and not an insect in an acre of it! No, it was no good; my courage broke down, and one cold, stormy night I took wing, flying well inland on account of the strong easterly gales. It was snowing hard as I beat through the passes of the great mountains, and I had a stiff fight to win through; but never shall I forget the blissful feeling of the hot sun again on my back as I sped down to the lakes that lay so blue and placid below me, and the taste of my first fat insect! The past was like a bad dream; the future was all happy holiday as I moved Southwards week by week, easily, lazily, lingering as long as I dared, but always heeding the call! No, I had had my warning; never again did I think of disobedience.’

‘Ah, yes, the call of the South, of the South!’ twittered the other two dreamily. ‘Its songs, its hues, its radiant air! O, do you remember—’ and, forgetting the Rat, they slid into passionate reminiscence, while he listened fascinated, and his heart burned within him. In himself, too, he knew that it was vibrating at last, that chord hitherto dormant and unsuspected. The mere chatter of these southern-bound birds, their pale and second-hand reports, had yet power to awaken this wild new sensation and thrill him through and through with it; what would one moment of the real thing work in him—one passionate touch of the real southern sun, one waft of the authentic odour? With closed eyes he dared to dream a moment in full abandonment, and when he looked again the river seemed steely and chill, the green fields grey and lightless. Then his loyal heart seemed to cry out on his weaker self for its treachery.

‘Why do you ever come back then, at all?’ he demanded of the swallows jealously. ‘What do you find to attract you in this poor drab little country?’

‘And do you think,’ said the first swallow, ‘that the other call is not for us too, in its due season? The call of lush meadow-grass, wet orchards, warm, insect-haunted ponds, of browsing cattle, of hay-making,

and all the farm-buildings clustering round the House of the perfect Eaves?’

‘Do you suppose,’ asked the second one, ‘that you are the only living thing that craves with a hungry longing to hear the cuckoo’s note again?’

‘In due time,’ said the third, ‘we shall be homesick once more for quiet water-lilies swaying on the surface of an English stream. But to-day all that seems pale and thin and very far away. Just now our blood dances to other music.’

They fell a-twittering among themselves once more, and this time their intoxicating babble was of violet seas, tawny sands, and lizard-haunted walls.

Restlessly the Rat wandered off once more, climbed the slope that rose gently from the north bank of the river, and lay looking out towards the great ring of Downs that barred his vision further southwards—his simple horizon hitherto, his Mountains of the Moon, his limit behind which lay nothing he had cared to see or to know. To-day, to him gazing south with a newborn need stirring in his heart, the clear sky over their long low outline seemed to pulsate with promise; to-day, the unseen was everything, the unknown the only real fact of life. On this side of the hills was now the real blank, on the other lay the crowded and coloured panorama that his inner eye was seeing so clearly. What seas lay beyond, green, leaping, and crested! What sun-bathed coasts, along which the white villas glittered against the olive woods! What quiet harbours, thronged with gallant shipping bound for purple islands of wine and spice,* islands set low in languorous waters!

He rose and descended river-wards once more; then changed his mind and sought the side of the dusty lane. There, lying half-buried in the thick, cool under-hedge tangle that bordered it, he could muse on the metalled road and all the wondrous world that it led to; on all the wayfarers, too, that might have trodden it, and the fortunes and adventures they had gone to seek or found unseeking—out there, beyond—beyond!

Footsteps fell on his ear, and the figure of one that walked somewhat wearily came into view; and he saw that it was a Rat, and a very dusty one.* The wayfarer, as he reached him, saluted with a gesture of courtesy that had something foreign about it—hesitated a moment—then with a pleasant smile turned from the track and sat down by

his side in the cool herbage. He seemed tired, and the Rat let him rest unquestioned, understanding something of what was in his thoughts; knowing, too, the value all animals attach at times to mere silent companionship, when the weary muscles slacken and the mind marks time.

The wayfarer was lean and keen-featured, and somewhat bowed at the shoulders; his paws were thin and long, his eyes much wrinkled at the corners, and he wore small gold earrings in his neatly-set, well-shaped ears. His knitted jersey was of a faded blue, his breeches, patched and stained, were based on a blue foundation, and his small belongings that he carried were tied up in a blue cotton handkerchief.

When he had rested awhile the stranger sighed, snuffed the air, and looked about him.

‘That was clover, that warm whiff on the breeze,’ he remarked; ‘and those are cows we hear cropping the grass behind us and blowing softly between mouthfuls. There is a sound of distant reapers, and yonder rises a blue line of cottage smoke against the woodland. The river runs somewhere close by, for I hear the call of a moorhen, and I see by your build that you’re a freshwater mariner. Everything seems asleep, and yet going on all the time. It is a goodly life that you lead, friend; no doubt the best in the world, if only you are strong enough to lead it!’

‘Yes, it’s *the* life, the only life, to live,’ responded the Water Rat dreamily, and without his usual wholehearted conviction.

‘I did not say exactly that,’ replied the stranger cautiously; ‘but no doubt it’s the best. I’ve tried it, and I know. And because I’ve just tried it—six months of it—and know it’s the best, here am I, footsore and hungry, tramping away from it, tramping southward, following the old call, back to the old life, *the* life which is mine and which will not let me go.’

‘Is this, then, yet another of them?’ mused the Rat. ‘And where have you just come from?’ he asked. He hardly dared to ask where he was bound for; he seemed to know the answer only too well.

‘Nice little farm,’ replied the wayfarer briefly. ‘Upalong in that direction’—he nodded northwards. ‘Never mind about it. I had everything I could want—everything I had any right to expect of life, and more; and here I am! Glad to be here all the same, though, glad to be here! So many miles further on the road, so many hours nearer to my heart’s desire!’

His shining eyes held fast to the horizon, and he seemed to be listening for some sound that was wanting from that inland acreage, vocal as it was with the cheerful music of pasturage and farmyard.

‘You are not one of *us*,’ said the Water Rat, ‘nor yet a farmer; nor even, I should judge, of this country.’

‘Right,’ replied the stranger. ‘I’m a seafaring rat, I am, and the port I originally hail from is Constantinople, though I’m a sort of foreigner there too, in a manner of speaking. You will have heard of Constantinople, friend? A fair city, and an ancient and glorious one. And you may have heard, too, of Sigurd, King of Norway,* and how he sailed thither with sixty ships, and how he and his men rode up through streets all canopied in their honour with purple and gold; and how the Emperor and Empress came down and banqueted with him on board his ship. When Sigurd returned home, many of his Northmen remained behind and entered the Emperor’s body-guard, and my ancestor, a Norwegian born, stayed behind too, with the ships that Sigurd gave the Emperor. Seafarers we have ever been, and no wonder; as for me, the city of my birth is no more my home than any pleasant port between there and the London River. I know them all, and they know me. Set me down on any of their quays or foreshores, and I am home again.’

‘I suppose you go great voyages,’ said the Water Rat with growing interest. ‘Months and months out of sight of land, and provisions running short, and allowanced as to water, and your mind communing with the mighty ocean, and all that sort of thing?’

‘By no means,’ said the Sea Rat frankly. ‘Such a life as you describe would not suit me at all. I’m in the coasting trade, and rarely out of sight of land. It’s the jolly times on shore that appeal to me, as much as any seafaring. O, those southern seaports! The smell of them, the riding-lights* at night, the glamour!’

‘Well, perhaps you have chosen the better way,’ said the Water Rat, but rather doubtfully. ‘Tell me something of your coasting, then, if you have a mind to, and what sort of harvest an animal of spirit might hope to bring home from it to warm his latter days with gallant memories by the fireside; for my life, I confess to you, feels to me to-day somewhat narrow and circumscribed.’

‘My last voyage,’ began the Sea Rat, ‘that landed me eventually in this country, bound with high hopes for my inland farm, will serve as a good example of any of them, and, indeed, as an epitome of my

highly-coloured life. Family troubles, as usual, began it. The domestic storm-cone* was hoisted, and I shipped myself on board a small trading vessel bound from Constantinople, by classic seas whose every wave throbs with a deathless memory, to the Grecian Islands and the Levant. Those were golden days and balmy nights! In and out of harbour all the time—old friends everywhere—sleeping in some cool temple or ruined cistern during the heat of the day—feasting and song after sundown, under great stars set in a velvet sky! Thence we turned and coasted up the Adriatic, its shores swimming in an atmosphere of amber, rose, and aquamarine; we lay in wide land-locked harbours, we roamed through ancient and noble cities, until at last one morning, as the sun rose royally behind us, we rode into Venice* down a path of gold. O, Venice is a fine city, wherein a rat can wander at his ease and take his pleasure! Or, when weary of wandering, can sit at the edge of the Grand Canal at night, feasting with his friends, when the air is full of music and the sky full of stars, and the lights flash and shimmer on the polished steel prows of the swaying gondolas, packed so that you could walk across the canal on them from side to side! And then the food—do you like shell-fish? Well, well, we won't linger over that now.'

He was silent for a time; and the Water Rat, silent too and enthralled, floated on dream-canals and heard a phantom song pealing high between vaporious grey wave-lapped walls.

'Southwards we sailed again at last,' continued the Sea Rat, 'coasting down the Italian shore, till finally we made Palermo, and there I quitted for a long, happy spell on shore. I never stick too long to one ship; one gets narrow-minded and prejudiced. Besides, Sicily is one of my happy hunting grounds. I know everybody there, and their ways just suit me. I spent many jolly weeks in the island, staying with friends up country. When I grew restless again I took advantage of a ship that was trading to Sardinia and Corsica; and very glad I was to feel the fresh breeze and the sea-spray in my face once more.'

'But isn't it very hot and stuffy, down in the—hold, I think you call it?' asked the Water Rat.

The seafarer looked at him with the suspicion of a wink. 'I'm an old hand,' he remarked with much simplicity. 'The captain's cabin's good enough for me.'

'It's a hard life, by all accounts,' murmured the Rat, sunk in deep thought.

‘For the crew it is,’ replied the seafarer gravely, again with the ghost of a wink.

‘From Corsica,’ he went on, ‘I made use of a ship that was taking wine to the mainland. We made Alassio* in the evening, lay to, hauled up our wine-casks, and hove them overboard, tied one to the other by a long line. Then the crew took to the boats and rowed shorewards, singing as they went, and drawing after them the long bobbing procession of casks, like a mile of porpoises. On the sands they had horses waiting, which dragged the casks up the steep street of the little town with a fine rush and clatter and scramble. When the last cask was in, we went and refreshed and rested, and sat late into the night, drinking with our friends; and next morning I was off to the great olive-woods for a spell and a rest. For now I had done with islands for the time, and ports and shipping were plentiful; so I led a lazy life among the peasants, lying and watching them work, or stretched high on the hillside with the blue Mediterranean far below me. And so at length, by easy stages, and partly on foot, partly by sea, to Marseilles, and the meeting of old shipmates, and the visiting of great ocean-bound vessels, and feasting once more. Talk of shell-fish! Why, sometimes I dream of the shell-fish of Marseilles, and wake up crying!’

‘That reminds me,’ said the polite Water Rat; ‘you happened to mention that you were hungry, and I ought to have spoken earlier. Of course you will stop and take your midday meal with me? My hole is close by; it is some time past noon, and you are very welcome to whatever there is.’

‘Now I call that kind and brotherly of you,’ said the Sea Rat. ‘I was indeed hungry when I sat down, and ever since I inadvertently happened to mention shell-fish, my pangs have been extreme. But couldn’t you fetch it along out here? I am none too fond of going under hatches, unless I’m obliged to; and then, while we eat, I could tell you more concerning my voyages and the pleasant life I lead—at least, it is very pleasant to me, and by your attention I judge it commends itself to you; whereas if we go indoors it is a hundred to one that I shall presently fall asleep.’

‘That is indeed an excellent suggestion,’ said the Water Rat, and hurried off home. There he got out the luncheon-basket and packed a simple meal, in which, remembering the stranger’s origin and preferences, he took care to include a yard of long French bread, a sausage out of which the garlic sang, some cheese which lay down and cried,

and a long-necked straw-covered flask containing bottled sunshine shed and garnered on far Southern slopes. Thus laden, he returned with all speed, and blushed for pleasure at the old seaman's commendations of his taste and judgment, as together they unpacked the basket and laid out the contents on the grass by the roadside.

The Sea Rat, as soon as his hunger was somewhat assuaged, continued the history of his latest voyage, conducting his simple hearer from port to port of Spain, landing him at Lisbon, Oporto, and Bordeaux, introducing him to the pleasant harbours of Cornwall and Devon, and so up the Channel to that final quayside, where, landing after winds long contrary, storm driven and weather-beaten, he had caught the first magical hints and heraldings of another Spring, and, fired by these, had sped on a long tramp inland, hungry for the experiment of life on some quiet farmstead, very far from the weary beating of any sea.

Spellbound and quivering with excitement, the Water Rat followed the Adventurer league by league, over stormy bays, through crowded roadsteads,* across harbour bars on a racing tide, up winding rivers that hid their busy little towns round a sudden turn, and left him with a regretful sigh planted at his dull inland farm, about which he desired to hear nothing.

By this time their meal was over, and the Seafarer, refreshed and strengthened, his voice more vibrant, his eye lit with a brightness that seemed caught from some far-away sea-beacon, filled his glass with the red and glowing vintage of the South, and, leaning towards the Water Rat, compelled his gaze* and held him, body and soul, while he talked. Those eyes were of the changing foam-streaked grey-green of leaping Northern seas; in the glass shone a hot ruby that seemed the very heart of the South, beating for him who had courage to respond to its pulsation. The twin lights, the shifting grey and the steadfast red, mastered the Water Rat and held him bound, fascinated, powerless. The quiet world outside their rays receded far away and ceased to be. And the talk, the wonderful talk flowed on—or was it speech entirely, or did it pass at times into song—chanty of the sailors weighing the dripping anchor, sonorous hum of the shrouds in a tearing North-Easter, ballad of the fisherman hauling his nets at sundown against an apricot sky, chords of guitar and mandoline from gondola or caique?* Did it change into the cry of the wind, plaintive at first, angrily shrill as it freshened, rising to a tearing

whistle, sinking to a musical trickle of air from the leech* of the belling sail? All these sounds the spellbound listener seemed to hear, and with them the hungry complaint of the gulls and the sea-mews, the soft thunder of the breaking wave, the cry of the protesting shingle. Back into speech again it passed, and with beating heart he was following the adventures of a dozen seaports, the fights, the escapes, the rallies, the comradeships, the gallant undertakings; or he searched islands for treasure, fished in still lagoons and dozed day-long on warm white sand. Of deep-sea fishings he heard tell, and mighty silver gatherings of the mile-long net; of sudden perils, noise of breakers on a moonless night, or the tall bows of the great liner taking shape overhead through the fog; of the merry home-coming, the headland rounded, the harbour lights opened out: the groups seen dimly on the quay, the cheery hail, the splash of the hawser;* the trudge up the steep little street towards the comforting glow of red-curtained windows.

Lastly, in his waking dream it seemed to him that the Adventurer had risen to his feet, but was still speaking, still holding him fast with his sea-grey eyes.

‘And now,’ he was softly saying, ‘I take to the road again, holding on south-westwards for many a long and dusty day; till at last I reach the little grey sea town I know so well,* that clings along one steep side of the harbour. There through dark doorways you look down flights of stone steps, overhung by great pink tufts of valerian and ending in a patch of sparkling blue water.* The little boats that lie tethered to the rings and stanchions of the old sea-wall are gaily painted as those I clambered in and out of in my own childhood; the salmon leap on the flood tide, schools of mackerel flash and play past quay-sides and foreshores, and by the windows the great vessels glide, night and day, up to their moorings or forth to the open sea. There, sooner or later, the ships of all seafaring nations arrive; and there, at its destined hour, the ship of my choice will let go its anchor. I shall take my time, I shall tarry and bide, till at last the right one lies waiting for me, warped out into midstream, loaded low, her bowsprit pointing down harbour. I shall slip on board, by boat or along hawser; and then one morning I shall wake to the song and tramp of the sailors, the clink of the capstan, and the rattle of the anchor-chain coming merrily in. We shall break out the jib and the foresail, the white houses on the harbour side will glide slowly past us as she gathers steering-way, and

the voyage will have begun! As she forges towards the headland she will clothe herself with canvas; and then, once outside, the sounding slap of great green seas as she heels to the wind, pointing South!

‘And you, you will come too, young brother; for the days pass, and never return, and the South still waits for you. Take the Adventure, heed the call, now ere the irrevocable moment passes! ’Tis but a banging of the door behind you, a blithesome step forward, and you are out of the old life and into the new! Then some day, some day long hence, jog home here if you will, when the cup has been drained and the play has been played, and sit down by your quiet river with a store of goodly memories for company. You can easily overtake me on the road, for you are young, and I am ageing and go softly. I will linger, and look back; and at last I will surely see you coming, eager and light-hearted, with all the South in your face!’

The voice died away and ceased, as an insect’s tiny trumpet dwindles swiftly into silence; and the Water Rat, paralysed and staring, saw at last but a distant speck on the white surface of the road.

Mechanically he rose and proceeded to repack the luncheon-basket, carefully and without haste. Mechanically he returned home, gathered together a few small necessaries and special treasures he was fond of, and put them in a satchel,* acting with slow deliberation, moving about the room like a sleep-walker; listening ever with parted lips. He swung the satchel over his shoulder, carefully selected a stout stick for his wayfaring, and with no haste, but with no hesitation at all, he stepped across the threshold just as the Mole appeared at the door.

‘Why, where are you off to, Ratty?’ asked the Mole in great surprise, grasping him by the arm.

‘Going South, with the rest of them,’ murmured the Rat in a dreamy monotone, never looking at him. ‘Seawards first and then on shipboard, and so to the shores that are calling me!’

He pressed resolutely forward, still without haste, but with dogged fixity of purpose; but the Mole, now thoroughly alarmed, placed himself in front of him, and looking into his eyes saw that they were glazed and set and turned a streaked and shifting grey—not his friend’s eyes, but the eyes of some other animal! Grappling with him strongly he dragged him inside, threw him down, and held him.

The Rat struggled desperately for a few moments, and then his strength seemed suddenly to leave him, and he lay still and exhausted, with closed eyes, trembling. Presently the Mole assisted him to rise

and placed him in a chair, where he sat collapsed and shrunken into himself, his body shaken by a violent shivering, passing in time into an hysterical fit of dry sobbing. Mole made the door fast, threw the satchel into a drawer and locked it, and sat down quietly on the table by his friend, waiting for the strange seizure to pass. Gradually the Rat sank into a troubled doze, broken by starts and confused murmurings of things strange and wild and foreign to the unenlightened Mole; and from that he passed into a deep slumber.

Very anxious in mind, the Mole left him for a time and busied himself with household matters; and it was getting dark when he returned to the parlour and found the Rat where he had left him, wide awake indeed, but listless, silent, and dejected. He took one hasty glance at his eyes; found them, to his great gratification, clear and dark and brown again as before; and then sat down and tried to cheer him up and help him to relate what had happened to him.

Poor Ratty did his best, by degrees, to explain things; but how could he put into cold words what had mostly been suggestion? How recall, for another's benefit, the haunting sea voices that had sung to him, how reproduce at second-hand the magic of the Seafarer's hundred reminiscences? Even to himself, now the spell was broken and the glamour gone, he found it difficult to account for what had seemed, some hours ago, the inevitable and only thing. It is not surprising, then, that he failed to convey to the Mole any clear idea of what he had been through that day.

To the Mole this much was plain: the fit, or attack, had passed away, and had left him sane again, though shaken and cast down by the reaction. But he seemed to have lost all interest for the time in the things that went to make up his daily life, as well as in all pleasant forecastings of the altered days and doings that the changing season was surely bringing.

Casually, then, and with seeming indifference, the Mole turned his talk to the harvest that was being gathered in, the towering wagons and their straining teams, the growing ricks, and the large moon rising over bare acres dotted with sheaves. He talked of the reddening apples around, of the browning nuts, of jams and preserves and the distilling of cordials; till by easy stages such as these he reached mid-winter, its hearty joys and its snug home life, and then he became simply lyrical.

By degrees the Rat began to sit up and to join in. His dull eye brightened, and he lost some of his listless air.

Presently the tactful Mole slipped away and returned with a pencil and a few half-sheets of paper, which he placed on the table at his friend's elbow.

'It's quite a long time since you did any poetry,' he remarked. 'You might have a try at it this evening, instead of—well, brooding over things so much. I've an idea that you'll feel a lot better when you've got something jotted down—if it's only just the rhymes.'

The Rat pushed the paper away from him wearily, but the discreet Mole took occasion to leave the room, and when he peeped in again some time later, the Rat was absorbed and deaf to the world; alternately scribbling and sucking the top of his pencil. It is true that he sucked a good deal more than he scribbled; but it was joy to the Mole to know that the cure had at least begun.

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF TOAD

THE front door of the hollow tree faced eastwards, so Toad was called at an early hour; partly by the bright sunlight streaming in on him, partly by the exceeding coldness of his toes, which made him dream that he was at home in bed in his own handsome room with the Tudor window, on a cold winter's night, and his bedclothes had got up, grumbling and protesting they couldn't stand the cold any longer, and had run downstairs to the kitchen fire to warm themselves; and he had followed, on bare feet, along miles and miles of icy stone-paved passages, arguing and beseeching them to be reasonable. He would probably have been aroused much earlier, had he not slept for some weeks on straw over stone flags, and almost forgotten the friendly feeling of thick blankets pulled well up round the chin.

Sitting up, he rubbed his eyes first and his complaining toes next, wondered for a moment where he was, looking round for familiar stone wall and little barred window; then, with a leap of the heart, remembered everything—his escape, his flight, his pursuit; remembered, first and best thing of all, that he was free!

Free! The word and the thought alone were worth fifty blankets. He was warm from end to end as he thought of the jolly world outside, waiting eagerly for him to make his triumphal entrance, ready to serve him and play up to him, anxious to help him and to keep him company, as it always had been in days of old before misfortune fell upon him. He shook himself and combed the dry leaves out of his hair with his fingers; and, his toilet complete, marched forth into the comfortable morning sun, cold but confident, hungry but hopeful, all nervous terrors of yesterday dispelled by rest and sleep and frank and heartening sunshine.

He had the world all to himself, that early summer morning. The dewy woodland, as he threaded it, was solitary and still; the green fields that succeeded the trees were his own to do as he liked with; the road itself, when he reached it, in that loneliness that was everywhere, seemed, like a stray dog, to be looking anxiously for company. Toad, however, was looking for something that could talk, and tell him clearly which way he ought to go. It is all very well, when you have a

light heart, and a clear conscience, and money in your pocket, and nobody scouring the country for you to drag you off to prison again, to follow where the road beckons and points, not caring whither. The practical Toad cared very much indeed, and he could have kicked the road for its helpless silence when every minute was of importance to him.

The reserved rustic road was presently joined by a shy little brother in the shape of a canal, which took its hand and ambled along by its side in perfect confidence, but with the same tongue-tied, uncommunicative attitude towards strangers. 'Bother them!' said Toad to himself. 'But, anyhow, one thing's clear. They must both be coming *from* somewhere, and going *to* somewhere. You can't get over that, Toad, my boy!' So he marched on patiently by the water's edge.

Round a bend in the canal came plodding a solitary horse, stooping forward as if in anxious thought. From rope traces attached to his collar stretched a long line, taut, but dipping with his stride, the further part of it dripping pearly drops. Toad let the horse pass, and stood waiting for what the fates were sending him.

With a pleasant swirl of quiet water at its blunt bow the barge slid up alongside of him, its gaily painted gunwale* level with the towing-path, its sole occupant a big stout woman wearing a linen sun-bonnet, one brawny arm* laid along the tiller.

'A nice morning, ma'am!' she remarked to Toad, as she drew up level with him.

'I dare say it is, ma'am!' responded Toad politely, as he walked along the tow-path abreast of her. 'I dare say it *is* a nice morning to them that's not in sore trouble, like what I am. Here's my married daughter, she sends off to me post-haste to come to her at once; so off I comes, not knowing what may be happening or going to happen, but fearing the worst, as you will understand, ma'am, if you're a mother, too. And I've left my business to look after itself—I'm in the washing and laundering line, you must know, ma'am—and I've left my young children to look after themselves, and a more mischievous and troublesome set of young imps doesn't exist, ma'am; and I've lost all my money, and lost my way, and as for what may be happening to my married daughter, why, I don't like to think of it, ma'am!'

'Where might your married daughter be living, ma'am?' asked the barge-woman.

'She lives near to the river, ma'am,' replied Toad. 'Close to a fine house called Toad Hall, that's somewheres hereabouts in these parts. Perhaps you may have heard of it.'

'Toad Hall? Why, I'm going that way myself,' replied the barge-woman. 'This canal joins the river some miles further on, a little above Toad Hall; and then it's an easy walk. You come along in the barge with me, and I'll give you a lift.'

She steered the barge close to the bank, and Toad, with many humble and grateful acknowledgements, stepped lightly on board and sat down with great satisfaction. 'Toad's luck again!' thought he. 'I always come out on top!'

'So you're in the washing business, ma'am?' said the barge-woman politely, as they glided along. 'And a very good business you've got too, I dare say, if I'm not making too free in saying so.'

'Finest business in the whole county,' said Toad airily. 'All the gentry come to me—wouldn't go to any one else if they were paid, they know me so well. You see, I understand my work thoroughly, and attend to it all myself. Washing, ironing, clear-starching,* making up gents' fine shirts for evening wear—everything's done under my own eye!'

'But surely you don't *do* all that work yourself, ma'am?' asked the barge-woman respectfully.

'O, I have girls,' said Toad lightly: 'twenty girls or thereabouts, always at work. But you know what *girls* are, ma'am! Nasty little hussies, that's what *I* call 'em!'

'So do I, too,' said the barge-woman with great heartiness. 'But I dare say you set yours to rights, the idle trollops! And are you *very* fond of washing?'

'I love it,' said Toad. 'I simply dote on it. Never so happy as when I've got both arms in the wash-tub. But, then, it comes so easy to me! No trouble at all! A real pleasure, I assure you, ma'am!'

'What a bit of luck, meeting you!' observed the barge-woman thoughtfully. 'A regular piece of good fortune for both of us!'

'Why, what do you mean?' asked Toad nervously.

'Well, look at me, now,' replied the barge-woman. 'I like washing, too, just the same as you do; and for that matter, whether I like it or not I have got to do all my own, naturally, moving about as I do. Now my husband, he's such a fellow for shirking his work and leaving the barge to me, that never a moment do I get for seeing to my own affairs.'

By rights he ought to be here now, either steering or attending to the horse, though luckily the horse has sense enough to attend to himself. Instead of which, he's gone off with the dog, to see if they can't pick up a rabbit for dinner somewhere. Says he'll catch me up at the next lock. Well, that's as may be—I don't trust him, once he gets off with that dog, who's worse than he is. But meantime, how am I to get on with my washing?'

'O, never mind about the washing,' said Toad, not liking the subject. 'Try and fix your mind on that rabbit. A nice fat young rabbit, I'll be bound. Got any onions?'

'I can't fix my mind on anything but my washing,' said the barge-woman, 'and I wonder you can be talking of rabbits, with such a joyful prospect before you. There's a heap of things of mine that you'll find in a corner of the cabin. If you'll just take one or two of the most necessary sort—I won't venture to describe them to a lady like you, but you'll recognise 'em at a glance—and put them through the wash-tub as we go along, why, it'll be a pleasure to you, as you rightly say, and a real help to me. You'll find a tub handy, and soap, and a kettle on the stove, and a bucket to haul up water from the canal with. Then I shall know you're enjoying yourself, instead of sitting here idle, looking at the scenery and yawning your head off.'

'Here, you let me steer!' said Toad, now thoroughly frightened, 'and then you can get on with your washing your own way. I might spoil your things, or not do 'em as you like. I'm more used to gentlemen's things myself. It's my special line.'

'Let you steer?' replied the barge-woman, laughing. 'It takes some practice to steer a barge properly. Besides, it's dull work, and I want you to be happy. No, you shall do the washing you are so fond of, and I'll stick to the steering that I understand. Don't try and deprive me of the pleasure of giving you a treat!'

Toad was fairly cornered. He looked for escape this way and that, saw that he was too far from the bank for a flying leap, and sullenly resigned himself to his fate. 'If it comes to that,' he thought in desperation, 'I suppose any fool can *wash!*'

He fetched tub, soap, and other necessaries from the cabin, selected a few garments at random, tried to recollect what he had seen in casual glances through laundry windows, and set to.

A long half-hour passed, and every minute of it saw Toad getting crosser and crosser. Nothing that he could do to the things seemed to

please them or do them good. He tried coaxing, he tried slapping, he tried punching; they smiled back at him out of the tub unconverted, happy in their original sin. Once or twice he looked nervously over his shoulder at the barge-woman but she appeared to be gazing out in front of her, absorbed in her steering. His back ached badly, and he noticed with dismay that his paws were beginning to get all crinkly. Now Toad was very proud of his paws. He muttered under his breath words that should never pass the lips of either washerwomen or Toads; and lost the soap, for the fiftieth time.

A burst of laughter made him straighten himself and look round. The barge-woman was leaning back and laughing unrestrainedly, till the tears ran down her cheeks.*

‘I’ve been watching you all the time,’ she gasped. ‘I thought you must be a humbug all along, from the conceited way you talked. Pretty washerwoman you are! Never washed so much as a dish-clout in your life, I’ll lay!’

Toad’s temper, which had been simmering viciously for some time, now fairly boiled over, and he lost all control of himself.

‘You common, low, *fat* barge-woman!’ he shouted; ‘don’t you dare to talk to your betters like that! Washerwoman indeed! I would have you to know that I am a Toad, a very well-known respected, distinguished Toad! I may be under a bit of a cloud at present, but I will *not* be laughed at by a barge-woman!’

The woman moved nearer to him and peered under his bonnet keenly and closely. ‘Why, so you are!’ she cried. ‘Well, I never! A horrid, nasty, crawly Toad! And in my nice clean barge, too! Now that is a thing that I will *not* have.’

She relinquished the tiller for a moment. One big mottled arm shot out and caught Toad by a fore-leg, while the other gripped him fast by a hind-leg. Then the world turned suddenly upside down, the barge seemed to flit lightly across the sky, the wind whistled in his ears, and Toad found himself flying through the air, revolving rapidly as he went.

The water, when he eventually reached it with a loud splash, proved quite cold enough for his taste, though its chill was not sufficient to quell his proud spirit, or slake the heat of his furious temper. He rose to the surface spluttering, and when he had wiped the duckweed out of his eyes the first thing he saw was the fat barge-woman looking back at him over the stern of the retreating barge and laughing; and he vowed, as he coughed and choked, to be even with her.

He struck out for the shore, but the cotton gown greatly impeded his efforts, and when at length he touched land he found it hard to climb up the steep bank unassisted. He had to take a minute or two's rest to recover his breath; then, gathering his wet skirts well over his arms, he started to run after the barge as fast as his legs would carry him, wild with indignation, thirsting for revenge.

The barge-woman was still laughing when he drew up level with her. 'Put yourself through your mangle, washerwoman,' she called out, 'and iron your face and crimp it, and you'll pass for quite a decent-looking Toad!'

Toad never paused to reply. Solid revenge was what he wanted, not cheap, windy, verbal triumphs, though he had a thing or two in his mind that he would have liked to say. He saw what he wanted ahead of him. Running swiftly on he overtook the horse, unfastened the tow-rope and cast off, jumped lightly on the horse's back, and urged it to a gallop by kicking it vigorously in the sides. He steered for the open country, abandoning the tow-path, and swinging his steed down a rutty lane. Once he looked back, and saw that the barge had run aground on the other side of the canal, and the barge-woman was gesticulating wildly and shouting, 'Stop, stop, stop!' 'I've heard that song before,' said Toad, laughing, as he continued to spur his steed onward in its wild career.

The barge-horse was not capable of any very sustained effort, and its gallop soon subsided into a trot, and its trot into an easy walk; but Toad was quite contented with this, knowing that he, at any rate, was moving, and the barge was not. He had quite recovered his temper, now that he had done something he thought really clever; and he was satisfied to jog along quietly in the sun, taking advantage of any byways and bridle-paths, and trying to forget how very long it was since he had had a square meal, till the canal had been left very far behind him.

He had travelled some miles, his horse and he, and he was feeling drowsy in the hot sunshine, when the horse stopped, lowered his head, and began to nibble the grass; and Toad, waking up, just saved himself from falling off by an effort. He looked about him and found he was on a wide common,* dotted with patches of gorse and bramble as far as he could see. Near him stood a dingy gipsy caravan,* and beside it a man was sitting on a bucket turned upside down, very busy smoking and staring into the wide world. A fire of sticks was burning near by, and over the fire hung an iron pot, and out of that pot came

forth bubblings and gurglings, and a vague suggestive steaminess. Also smells—warm, rich, and varied smells—that twined and twisted and wreathed themselves at last into one complete, voluptuous, perfect smell that seemed like the very soul of Nature taking form and appearing to her children, a true Goddess, a mother of solace and comfort. Toad now knew well that he had not been really hungry before. What he had felt earlier in the day had been a mere trifling qualm. This was the real thing at last, and no mistake; and it would have to be dealt with speedily, too, or there would be trouble for somebody or something. He looked the gipsy over carefully, wondering vaguely whether it would be easier to fight him or cajole him. So there he sat, and sniffed and sniffed, and looked at the gipsy; and the gipsy sat and smoked, and looked at him.

Presently the gipsy took his pipe out of his mouth and remarked in a careless way, 'Want to sell that there horse of yours?'

Toad was completely taken aback. He did not know that gipsies were very fond of horsedealing, and never missed an opportunity, and he had not reflected that caravans were always on the move and took a deal of drawing. It had not occurred to him to turn the horse into cash, but the gipsy's suggestion seemed to smooth the way towards the two things he wanted so badly—ready money and a solid breakfast.

'What?' he said, 'me sell this beautiful young horse of mine? O no; it's out of the question. Who's going to take the washing home to my customers every week? Besides, I'm too fond of him, and he simply dotes on me.'

'Try and love a donkey,' suggested the gipsy. 'Some people do.'

'You don't seem to see,' continued Toad, 'that this fine horse of mine is a cut above you altogether. He's a blood horse,* he is, partly; not the part you see, of course—another part. And he's been a Prize Hackney,* too, in his time—that was the time before you knew him, but you can still tell it on him at a glance if you understand anything about horses. No, it's not to be thought of for a moment. All the same, how much might you be disposed to offer me for this beautiful young horse of mine?'

The gipsy looked the horse over, and then he looked Toad over with equal care, and looked at the horse again. 'Shillin' a leg,' he said briefly, and turned away, continuing to smoke and try to stare the wide world out of countenance.

‘A shilling a leg?’ cried Toad. ‘If you please, I must take a little time to work that out, and see just what it comes to.’

He climbed down off his horse, and left it to graze, and sat down by the gipsy, and did sums on his fingers, and at last he said, ‘A shilling a leg? Why, that comes to exactly four shillings, and no more. O no; I could not think of accepting four shillings for this beautiful young horse of mine.’

‘Well,’ said the gipsy, ‘I’ll tell you what I will do. I’ll make it five shillings, and that’s three-and-sixpence more than the animal’s worth. And that’s my last word.’

Then Toad sat and pondered long and deeply. For he was hungry and quite penniless, and still some way—he knew not how far—from home, and enemies might still be looking for him. To one in such a situation, five shillings may very well appear a large sum of money. On the other hand, it did not seem very much to get for a horse. But then, again, the horse hadn’t cost him anything; so whatever he got was all clear profit. At last he said firmly, ‘Look here, gipsy! I tell you what we will do; and this is *my* last word. You shall hand me over six shillings and sixpence, cash down; and further, in addition, thereto, you shall give me as much breakfast as I can possibly eat, at one sitting of course, out of that iron pot of yours that keeps sending forth such delicious and exciting smells. In return, I will make over to you my spirited young horse, with all the beautiful harness and trappings that are on him, freely thrown in. If that’s not good enough for you, say so, and I’ll be getting on. I know a man near here who’s wanted this horse of mine for years.’

The gipsy grumbled frightfully, and declared if he did a few more deals of that sort he’d be ruined. But in the end he lugged a dirty canvas bag out of the depths of his trouser pocket, and counted out six shillings and sixpence into Toad’s paw. Then he disappeared into the caravan for an instant, and returned with a large iron plate and a knife, fork, and spoon. He tilted up the pot, and a glorious stream of hot rich stew gurgled into the plate. It was, indeed, the most beautiful stew in the world,* being made of partridge, and pheasants, and chickens, and hares, and rabbits, and pea-hens, and guinea-fowls, and one or two other things. Toad took the plate on his lap, almost crying, and stuffed, and stuffed, and stuffed, and kept asking for more, and the gipsy never grudged it him. He thought that he had never eaten so good a breakfast in all his life.

When Toad had taken as much stew on board as he thought he could possibly hold, he got up and said good-bye to the gipsy, and took an affectionate farewell of the horse; and the gipsy, who knew the riverside well, gave him directions which way to go, and he set forth on his travels again in the best possible spirits. He was, indeed, a very different Toad from the animal of an hour ago. The sun was shining brightly, his wet clothes were quite dry again, he had money in his pocket once more, he was nearing home and friends and safety, and, most and best of all, he had had a substantial meal, hot and nourishing, and felt big, and strong, and careless, and self-confident.

As he tramped along gaily, he thought of his adventures and escapes, and how when things seemed at their worst he had always managed to find a way out; and his pride and conceit began to swell within him. 'Ho, ho!' he said to himself as he marched along with his chin in the air, 'what a clever Toad I am! There is surely no animal equal to me for cleverness in the whole world! My enemies shut me up in prison, encircled by sentries, watched night and day by warders; I walk out through them all, by sheer ability coupled with courage. They pursue me with engines, and policemen, and revolvers; I snap my fingers at them, and vanish, laughing, into space. I am, unfortunately, thrown into a canal by a woman fat of body and very evil-minded. What of it? I swim ashore; I seize her horse, I ride off in triumph, and I sell the horse for a whole pocketful of money and an excellent breakfast! Ho, ho! I am The Toad, the handsome, the popular, the successful Toad!' He got so puffed up with conceit that he made up a song as he walked in praise of himself, and sang it at the top of his voice, though there was no one to hear it but him. It was perhaps the most conceited song that any animal ever composed.

'The world has held great Heroes,
 As history-books have showed;
 But never a name to go down to fame
 Compared with that of Toad!

'The clever men at Oxford
 Know all that there is to be knowed.
 But they none of them know one half as much
 As intelligent Mr. Toad!

'The animals sat in the Ark and cried,
Their tears in torrents flowed.
Who was it said, "There's land ahead?"
Encouraging Mr. Toad!

'The Army all saluted
As they marched along the road.
Was it the King? Or Kitchener?*"
No. It was Mr. Toad.

'The Queen and her Ladies-in-waiting
Sat at the window and sewed.
She cried, "Look! who's that *handsome* man?"
They answered, "Mr. Toad."'

There was a great deal more of the same sort, but too dreadfully conceited to be written down. These are some of the milder verses.

He sang as he walked, and he walked as he sang, and got more inflated every minute. But his pride was shortly to have a severe fall.

After some miles of country lanes he reached the high road, and as he turned into it and glanced along its white length, he saw approaching him a speck that turned into a dot and then into a blob, and then into something very familiar; and a double note of warning, only too well known, fell on his delighted ear.

'This is something like!' said the excited Toad. 'This is real life again, this is once more the great world from which I have been missed so long! I will hail them, my brothers of the wheel, and pitch them a yarn, of the sort that has been so successful hitherto; and they will give me a lift, of course, and then I will talk to them some more; and, perhaps, with luck, it may even end in my driving up to Toad Hall in a motor-car! That will be one in the eye for Badger!'

He stepped confidently out into the road to hail the motor-car, which came along at an easy pace, slowing down as it neared the lane; when suddenly he became very pale, his heart turned to water, his knees shook and yielded under him, and he doubled up and collapsed with a sickening pain in his interior. And well he might, the unhappy animal; for the approaching car was the very one he had stolen out of the yard of the Red Lion Hotel* on that fatal day when all his troubles began! And the people in it were the very same people he had sat and watched at luncheon in the coffee-room!

He sank down in a shabby, miserable heap in the road, murmuring to himself in his despair, 'It's all up! It's all over now! Chains and policemen again! Prison again! Dry bread and water again! O, what a fool I have been! What did I want to go strutting about the country for, singing conceited songs, and hailing people in broad day on the high road, instead of hiding till nightfall and slipping home quietly by back ways! O hapless Toad! O ill-fated animal!'

The terrible motor-car drew slowly nearer and nearer, till at last he heard it stop just short of him. Two gentlemen got out and walked round the trembling heap of crumpled misery lying in the road, and one of them said, 'O dear! this is very sad! Here is a poor old thing—a washerwoman apparently—who has fainted in the road! Perhaps she is overcome by the heat, poor creature; or possibly she has not had any food to-day. Let us lift her into the car and take her to the nearest village, where doubtless she has friends.'

They tenderly lifted Toad into the motor-car and propped him up with soft cushions, and proceeded on their way.

When Toad heard them talk in so kind and sympathetic a manner, he knew that he was not recognised, his courage began to revive, and he cautiously opened first one eye and then the other.

'Look!' said one of the gentlemen, 'she is better already. The fresh air is doing her good. How do you feel now, ma'am?'

'Thank you kindly, sir,' said Toad in a feeble voice, 'I'm feeling a great deal better!'

'That's right,' said the gentleman. 'Now keep quite still, and, above all, don't try to talk.'

'I won't,' said Toad. 'I was only thinking, if I might sit on the front seat there, beside the driver, where I could get the fresh air full in my face, I should soon be all right again.'

'What a very sensible woman!' said the gentleman. 'Of course you shall.' So they carefully helped Toad into the front seat beside the driver, and on they went once more.

Toad was almost himself again by now. He sat up, looked about him, and tried to beat down the tremors, the yearnings, the old cravings that rose up and beset him and took possession of him entirely.

'It is fate!' he said to himself. 'Why strive? why struggle?' and he turned to the driver at his side.

'Please, sir,' he said, 'I wish you would kindly let me try and drive the car for a little. I've been watching you carefully, and it looks so

easy and interesting, and I should like to be able to tell my friends that once I had driven a motor-car!

The driver laughed at the proposal, so heartily that the gentleman inquired what the matter was. When he heard, he said, to Toad's delight, 'Bravo, ma'am! I like your spirit. Let her have a try, and look after her. She won't do any harm.'

Toad eagerly scrambled into the seat vacated by the driver, took the steering-wheel in his hands, listened with affected humility to the instructions given him, and set the car in motion, but very slowly and carefully at first, for he was determined to be prudent.

The gentlemen behind clapped their hands and applauded, and Toad heard them saying, 'How well she does it! Fancy a washerwoman driving a car as well as that, the first time!'

Toad went a little faster; then faster still, and faster.

He heard the gentlemen call out warningly, 'Be careful, washerwoman!' And this annoyed him, and he began to lose his head.

The driver tried to interfere, but he pinned him down in his seat with one elbow, and put on full speed. The rush of air in his face, the hum of the engine, and the light jump of the car beneath him intoxicated his weak brain. 'Washerwoman, indeed!' he shouted recklessly. 'Ho, ho! I am the Toad, the motor-car snatcher, the prison-breaker, the Toad who always escapes! Sit still, and you shall know what driving really is, for you are in the hands of the famous, the skilful, the entirely fearless Toad!'

With a cry of horror the whole party rose and flung themselves on him. 'Seize him!' they cried, 'seize the Toad, the wicked animal who stole our motor-car! Bind him, chain him, drag him to the nearest police-station! Down with the desperate and dangerous Toad!'

Alas! they should have thought, they ought to have been more prudent, they should have remembered to stop the motor-car somehow before playing any pranks of that sort. With a half-turn of the wheel the Toad sent the car crashing through the low hedge that ran along the roadside. One mighty bound, a violent shock, and the wheels of the car were churning up the thick mud of a horse-pond.

Toad found himself flying through the air with the strong upward rush and delicate curve of a swallow. He liked the motion, and was just beginning to wonder whether it would go on until he developed wings and turned into a Toad-bird, when he landed on his back with a thump, in the soft rich grass of a meadow. Sitting up, he could just

see the motor-car in the pond, nearly submerged; the gentlemen and the driver, encumbered by their long coats, were floundering helplessly in the water.

He picked himself up rapidly and set off running across country as hard as he could, scrambling through hedges, jumping ditches, pounding across fields, till he was breathless and weary, and had to settle down into an easy walk. When he had recovered his breath somewhat, and was able to think calmly, he began to giggle, and from giggling he took to laughing, and he laughed till he had to sit down under a hedge. 'Ho, ho!' he cried, in ecstasies of self-admiration. 'Toad again! Toad, as usual comes out on top! Who was it got them to give him a lift? Who managed to get on the front seat for the sake of fresh air? Who persuaded them into letting him see if he could drive? Who landed them all in a horse-pond? Who escaped, flying gaily and unscathed through the air, leaving the narrow-minded, grudging, timid excursionists in the mud where they should rightly be? Why, Toad, of course; clever Toad, great Toad, *good* Toad!'

Then he burst into song again, and chanted with uplifted voice—

'The motor-car went Poop-poop-poop,
As it raced along the road.
Who was it steered it into a pond?
Ingenious Mr. Toad!

O, how clever I am! How clever, how clever, how very clev—'

A slight noise at a distance behind him made him turn his head and look. O horror! O misery! O despair!

About two fields off, a chauffeur in his leather gaiters and two large rural policemen were visible, running towards him as hard as they could go!

Poor Toad sprang to his feet and pelted away again, his heart in his mouth. 'O my!' he gasped, as he panted along, 'what an *ass* I am! What a *conceited* and heedless ass! Swaggering again! Shouting and singing songs again! Sitting still and gassing again! O my! O my! O my!'

He glanced back, and saw to his dismay that they were gaining on him. On he ran desperately, but kept looking back, and saw that they still gained steadily. He did his best, but he was a fat animal, and his legs were short, and still they gained. He could hear them close behind him now. Ceasing to heed where he was going, he struggled on blindly and wildly, looking back over his shoulder at the now

triumphant enemy, when suddenly the earth failed under his feet, he grasped at the air, and, splash! he found himself head over ears in deep water, rapid water, water that bore him along with a force he could not contend with; and he knew that in his blind panic he had run straight into the river!

He rose to the surface and tried to grasp the reeds and the rushes that grew along the water's edge close under the bank, but the stream was so strong that it tore them out of his hands. 'O my!' gasped poor Toad, 'if ever I steal a motor-car again! If ever I sing another conceited song'—then down he went, and came up breathless and spluttering. Presently he saw that he was approaching a big dark hole in the bank, just above his head, and as the stream bore him past he reached up with a paw and caught hold of the edge and held on. Then slowly and with difficulty he drew himself up out of the water, till at last he was able to rest his elbows on the edge of the hole. There he remained for some minutes, puffing and panting, for he was quite exhausted.

As he sighed and blew and stared before him into the dark hole, some bright small thing shone and twinkled in its depths, moving towards him. As it approached, a face grew up gradually around it, and it was a familiar face!

Brown and small, with whiskers.

Grave and round, with neat ears and silky hair.

It was the Water Rat!

‘LIKE SUMMER TEMPESTS CAME HIS TEARS’*

THE Rat put out a neat little brown paw, gripped Toad firmly by the scruff of the neck, and gave a great hoist and a pull; and the water-logged Toad came up slowly but surely over the edge of the hole, till at last he stood safe and sound in the hall, streaked with mud and weed to be sure, and with the water streaming off him, but happy and high-spirited as of old, now that he found himself once more in the house of a friend, and dodgings and evasions were over, and he could lay aside a disguise that was unworthy of his position and wanted such a lot of living up to.

‘O Ratty!’ he cried. ‘I’ve been through such times since I saw you last, you can’t think! Such trials, such sufferings, and all so nobly borne! Then such escapes, such disguises, such subterfuges, and all so cleverly planned and carried out! Been in prison—got out of it, of course! Been thrown into a canal—swam ashore! Stole a horse—sold him for a large sum of money! Humbugged everybody—made ’em all do exactly what I wanted! O, I *am* a smart Toad, and no mistake! What do you think my last exploit was? Just hold on till I tell you—’

‘Toad,’ said the Water Rat, gravely and firmly, ‘you go off upstairs at once, and take off that old cotton rag that looks as if it might formerly have belonged to some washerwoman, and clean yourself thoroughly, and put on some of my clothes, and try and come down looking like a gentleman, if you *can*; for a more shabby, bedraggled, disreputable-looking object than you are I never set eyes on in my whole life! Now, stop swaggering and arguing, and be off! I’ll have something to say to you later!’

Toad was at first inclined to stop and do some talking back at him. He had had enough of being ordered about when he was in prison, and here was the thing being begun all over again, apparently; and by a Rat, too! However, he caught sight of himself in the looking-glass over the hat-stand, with the rusty black bonnet perched rakishly over one eye, and he changed his mind and went very quickly and humbly upstairs to the Rat’s dressing-room. There he had a thorough wash and brush-up, changed his clothes, and stood for a long time before the glass, contemplating himself with pride and pleasure, and thinking

what utter idiots all the people must have been to have ever mistaken him for one moment for a washerwoman.

By the time he came down again luncheon was on the table, and very glad Toad was to see it, for he had been through some trying experiences and had taken much hard exercise since the excellent breakfast provided for him by the gipsy. While they ate Toad told the Rat all his adventures, dwelling chiefly on his own cleverness, and presence of mind in emergencies, and cunning in tight places; and rather making out that he had been having a gay and highly-coloured experience. But the more he talked and boasted, the more grave and silent the Rat became.

When at last Toad had talked himself to a standstill, there was silence for a while; and then the Rat said, 'Now, Toady, I don't want to give you pain, after all you've been through already; but, seriously, don't you see what an awful ass you've been making of yourself? On your own admission you have been handcuffed, imprisoned, starved, chased, terrified out of your life, insulted, jeered at, and ignominiously flung into the water—by a woman, too! Where's the amusement in that? Where does the fun come in? And all because you must needs go and steal a motor-car. You know that you've never had anything but trouble from motor-cars from the moment you first set eyes on one. But if you *will* be mixed up with them—as you generally are, five minutes after you've started—why *steal* them? Be a cripple, if you think it's exciting; be a bankrupt, for a change, if you've set your mind on it; but why choose to be a convict? When are you going to be sensible, and think of your friends, and try and be a credit to them? Do you suppose it's any pleasure to me, for instance, to hear animals saying, as I go about, that I'm the chap that keeps company with gaol-birds?'

Now, it was a very comforting point in Toad's character that he was a thoroughly good-hearted animal, and never minded being jawed by those who were his real friends. And even when most set upon a thing, he was always able to see the other side of the question. So although, while the Rat was talking so seriously, he kept saying to himself mutinously, 'But it *was* fun, though! Awful fun!' and making strange suppressed noises inside him, k-i-ck-ck-ck, and poop-p-p, and other sounds resembling stifled snorts, or the opening of soda-water bottles, yet when the Rat had quite finished, he heaved a deep sigh and said, very nicely and humbly, 'Quite right, Ratty! How *sound*

you always are! Yes, I've been a conceited old ass, I can quite see that; but now I'm going to be a good Toad, and not do it any more. As for motor-cars, I've not been at all so keen about them since my last ducking in that river of yours. The fact is, while I was hanging on to the edge of your hole and getting my breath, I had a sudden idea—a really brilliant idea—connected with motor-boats—there, there! don't take on so, old chap, and stamp, and upset things; it was only an idea, and we won't talk any more about it now. We'll have our coffee, *and* a smoke, and a quiet chat, and then I'm going to stroll gently down to Toad Hall, and get into clothes of my own, and set things going again on the old lines. I've had enough of adventures. I shall lead a quiet, steady, respectable life, pottering about my property, and improving it, and doing a little landscape gardening at times. There will always be a bit of dinner for my friends when they come to see me; and I shall keep a pony-chaise to jog about the country in, just as I used to in the good old days, before I got restless, and wanted to *do* things.'

'Stroll gently down to Toad Hall?' cried the Rat, greatly excited. 'What are you talking about? Do you mean to say you haven't *heard*?''

'Heard what?' said Toad, turning rather pale. 'Go on, Ratty! Quick! Don't spare me! What haven't I heard?'

'Do you mean to tell me,' shouted the Rat, thumping with his little fist upon the table, 'that you've heard nothing about the Stoats and Weasels?'

'What, the Wild Wooders?' cried Toad, trembling in every limb. 'No, not a word! What have they been doing?'

'—And how they've been and taken Toad Hall?' continued the Rat.

Toad leaned his elbows on the table, and his chin on his paws; and a large tear welled up in each of his eyes, overflowed and splashed on the table, plop! plop!

'Go on, Ratty,' he murmured presently; 'tell me all. The worst is over. I am an animal again. I can bear it.'

'When you—got—into that—that trouble of yours,' said the Rat slowly and impressively; 'I mean, when you—disappeared from society for a time, over that misunderstanding about a—a machine, you know—'

Toad merely nodded.

'Well, it was a good deal talked about down here, naturally,' continued the Rat, 'not only along the riverside, but even in the Wild Wood. Animals took sides, as always happens. The River-bankers stuck up

for you, and said you had been infamously treated, and there was no justice to be had in the land nowadays. But the Wild Wood animals said hard things, and served you right, and it was time this sort of thing was stopped. And they got very cocky, and went about saying you were done for this time! You would never come back again, never, never!

Toad nodded once more, keeping silence.

'That's the sort of little beasts they are,' the Rat went on. 'But Mole and Badger, they stuck out, through thick and thin, that you would come back again soon, somehow. They didn't know exactly how, but somehow!'

Toad began to sit up in his chair again, and to smirk a little.

'They argued from history,' continued the Rat. 'They said that no criminal laws had ever been known to prevail against cheek and plausibility such as yours, combined with the power of a long purse. So they arranged to move their things into Toad Hall, and sleep there, and keep it aired, and have it all ready for you when you turned up. They didn't guess what was going to happen, of course; still, they had their suspicions of the Wild Wood animals. Now I come to the most painful and tragic part of my story. One dark night—it was a *very* dark night, and blowing hard, too, and raining simply cats and dogs—a band of weasels, armed to the teeth, crept silently up the carriage-drive to the front entrance. Simultaneously, a body of desperate ferrets, advancing through the kitchen-garden, possessed themselves of the back-yard and offices; while a company of skirmishing stoats who stuck at nothing occupied the conservatory and the billiard-room, and held the French windows opening on to the lawn.

'The Mole and the Badger were sitting by the fire in the smoking-room, telling stories and suspecting nothing, for it wasn't a night for any animals to be out in, when those blood-thirsty villains broke down the doors and rushed in upon them from every side. They made the best fight they could, but what was the good? They were unarmed, and taken by surprise, and what can two animals do against hundreds? They took and beat them severely with sticks, those two poor faithful creatures, and turned them out in the cold and the wet, with many insulting and uncalled-for remarks!'

Here the unfeeling Toad broke into a snigger, and then pulled himself together and tried to look particularly solemn.

'And the Wild Wooders have been living in Toad Hall ever since,' continued the Rat; 'and going on simply anyhow! Lying in bed half

the day, and breakfast at all hours, and the place in such a mess (I'm told) it's not fit to be seen! Eating your grub, and drinking your drink, and making bad jokes about you, and singing vulgar songs, about—well, about prisons, and magistrates, and policemen; horrid personal songs, with no humour in them. And they're telling tradespeople and everybody that they've come to stay for good.'

'O, have they!' said Toad, getting up and seizing a stick. 'I'll jolly soon see about that!'

'It's no good, Toad!' called the Rat after him. 'You'd better come back and sit down; you'll only get into trouble.'

But the Toad was off, and there was no holding him. He marched rapidly down the road, his stick over his shoulder, fuming and muttering to himself in his anger, till he got near his front gate, when suddenly there popped up from behind the palings a long yellow ferret with a gun.

'Who comes there?' said the ferret sharply.

'Stuff and nonsense!' said Toad very angrily. 'What do you mean by talking like that to me? Come out of it at once, or I'll—'

The ferret said never a word, but he brought his gun up to his shoulder. Toad prudently dropped flat in the road, and *Bang!* a bullet whistled over his head.

The startled Toad scrambled to his feet and scampered off down the road as hard as he could; and as he ran he heard the ferret laughing, and other horrid thin little laughs taking it up and carrying on the sound.

He went back, very crestfallen, and told the Water Rat.

'What did I tell you?' said the Rat. 'It's no good. They've got sentries posted, and they are all armed. You must wait.'

Still, Toad was not inclined to give in all at once. So he got out the boat, and set off rowing up the river to where the garden front of Toad Hall came down to the waterside.

Arriving within sight of his old home, he rested on his oars and surveyed the land cautiously. All seemed very peaceful and deserted and quiet. He could see the whole front of Toad Hall, glowing in the evening sunshine, the pigeons settling by twos and threes along the straight line of the roof; the garden, a blaze of flowers; the creek that led up to the boat-house, the little wooden bridge that crossed it; all tranquil, uninhabited, apparently waiting for his return. He would try the boat-house first, he thought. Very warily he paddled

up to the mouth of the creek, and was just passing under the bridge, when . . . *Crash!*

A great stone, dropped from above, smashed through the bottom of the boat. It filled and sank, and Toad found himself struggling in deep water. Looking up, he saw two stoats leaning over the parapet of the bridge and watching him with great glee. 'It will be your head next time, Toady!' they called out to him. The indignant Toad swam to shore, while the stoats laughed and laughed, supporting each other, and laughed again, till they nearly had two fits—that is, one fit each, of course.

The Toad retraced his weary way on foot, and related his disappointing experiences to the Water Rat once more.

'Well, *what* did I tell you?' said the Rat very crossly. 'And, now, look here! See what you've been and done! Lost me my boat that I was so fond of, that's what you've done! And simply ruined that nice suit of clothes that I lent you! Really, Toad, of all the trying animals—I wonder you manage to keep any friends at all!'

The Toad saw at once how wrongly and foolishly he had acted. He admitted his errors and wrong-headedness and made a full apology to Rat for losing his boat and spoiling his clothes. And he wound up by saying, with that frank self-surrender which always disarmed his friends' criticism and won them back to his side, 'Ratty! I see that I have been a headstrong and a wilful Toad! Henceforth, believe me, I will be humble and submissive, and will take no action without your kind advice and full approval!'

'If that is really so,' said the good-natured Rat, already appeased, 'then my advice to you is, considering the lateness of the hour, to sit down and have your supper, which will be on the table in a minute, and be very patient. For I am convinced that we can do nothing until we have seen the Mole and the Badger, and heard their latest news, and held conference and taken their advice in this difficult matter.'

'O, ah, yes, of course, the Mole and the Badger,' said Toad lightly. 'What's become of them, the dear fellows? I had forgotten all about them.'

'Well may you ask!' said the Rat reproachfully. 'While you were riding about the country in expensive motor-cars, and galloping proudly on blood-horses, and breakfasting on the fat of the land, those two poor devoted animals have been camping out in the open, in every sort of weather, living very rough by day and lying very hard

by night; watching over your house, patrolling your boundaries, keeping a constant eye on the stoats and the weasels, scheming and planning and contriving how to get your property back for you. You don't deserve to have such true and loyal friends, Toad, you don't, really. Some day, when it's too late, you'll be sorry you didn't value them more while you had them!

'I'm an ungrateful beast, I know,' sobbed Toad, shedding bitter tears. 'Let me go out and find them, out into the cold, dark night, and share their hardships, and try and prove by—Hold on a bit! Surely I heard the chink of dishes on a tray! Supper's here at last, hooray! Come on, Ratty!'

The Rat remembered that poor Toad had been on prison fare for a considerable time, and that large allowances had therefore to be made. He followed him to the table accordingly, and hospitably encouraged him in his gallant efforts to make up for past privations.

They had just finished their meal and resumed their armchairs, when there came a heavy knock at the door.

Toad was nervous, but the Rat, nodding mysteriously at him, went straight up to the door and opened it and in walked Mr. Badger.

He had all the appearance of one who for some nights had been kept away from home and all its little comforts and conveniences. His shoes were covered with mud, and he was looking very rough and touzled; but then he had never been a very smart man, the Badger, at the best of times. He came solemnly up to Toad, shook him by the paw, and said, 'Welcome home, Toad! Alas! what am I saying? Home, indeed! This is a poor home-coming. Unhappy Toad!' Then he turned his back on him, sat down to the table, drew his chair up, and helped himself to a large slice of cold pie.

Toad was quite alarmed at this very serious and portentous style of greeting; but the Rat whispered to him, 'Never mind; don't take any notice; and don't say anything to him just yet. He's always rather low and despondent when he's wanting his victuals. In half an hour's time he'll be quite a different animal.'

So they waited in silence, and presently there came another and a lighter knock. The Rat, with a nod to Toad, went to the door and ushered in the Mole, very shabby and unwashed, with bits of hay and straw sticking in his fur.

'Hooray! Here's old Toad!' cried the Mole, his face beaming. 'Fancy having you back again!' And he began to dance round him. 'We never

dreamt you would turn up so soon. Why, you must have managed to escape, you clever, ingenious, intelligent Toad!

The Rat, alarmed, pulled him by the elbow; but it was too late. Toad was puffing and swelling already.

'Clever? O no!' he said. 'I'm not really clever, according to my friends. I've only broken out of the strongest prison in England, that's all! And captured a railway train and escaped on it, that's all! And disguised myself and gone about the country humbugging everybody, that's all! O no! I'm a stupid ass, I am! I'll tell you one or two of my little adventures, Mole, and you shall judge for yourself!'

'Well, well,' said the Mole, moving towards the supper-table; 'supposing you talk while I eat. Not a bite since breakfast! O my! O my!' And he sat down and helped himself liberally to cold beef and pickles.

Toad straddled on the hearth-rug, thrust his paw into his trouser-pocket and pulled out a handful of silver. 'Look at that!' he cried, displaying it. 'That's not so bad, is it, for a few minutes' work? And how do you think I done it, Mole? Horse-dealing! That's how I done it!'

'Go on, Toad,' said the Mole, immensely interested.

'Toad, do be quiet, please!' said the Rat. 'And don't you egg him on, Mole, when you know what he is; but please tell us as soon as possible what the position is, and what's best to be done, now that Toad is back at last.'

'The position's about as bad as it can be,' replied the Mole grumpily; and as for what's to be done, why, blest if I know! The Badger and I have been round and round the place, by night and by day; always the same thing. Sentries posted everywhere, guns poked out at us, stones thrown at us; always an animal on the look-out, and when they see us, my! how they do laugh. That's what annoys me most!'

'It's a very difficult situation,' said the Rat, reflecting deeply. 'But I think I see now, in the depths of my mind, what Toad really ought to do. I will tell you. He ought to—'

'No, he oughtn't!' shouted the Mole, with his mouth full. 'Nothing of the sort! You don't understand. What he ought to do is, he ought to—'

'Well, I shan't do it, anyway!' cried Toad, getting excited. 'I'm not going to be ordered about by you fellows! It's my house we're talking about, and I know exactly what to do, and I'll tell you. I'm going to—'

By this time they were all three talking at once, at the top of their voices, and the noise was simply deafening, when a thin, dry voice made itself heard, saying, 'Be quiet at once, all of you!' and instantly every one was silent.

It was the Badger, who, having finished his pie, had turned round in his chair and was looking at them severely. When he saw that he had secured their attention, and that they were evidently waiting for him to address them, he turned back to the table again and reached out for the cheese. And so great was the respect commanded by the solid qualities of that admirable animal, that not another word was uttered until he had quite finished his repast and brushed the crumbs from his knees. The Toad fidgeted a good deal, but the Rat held him firmly down.

When the Badger had quite done, he got up from his seat and stood before the fireplace, reflecting deeply. At last he spoke.

'Toad!' he said severely. 'You bad, troublesome little animal! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? What do you think your father, my old friend, would have said if he had been here to-night, and had known of all your goings on?'

Toad, who was on the sofa by this time, with his legs up, rolled over on his face, shaken by sobs of contrition.

'There, there!' went on the Badger more kindly. 'Never mind. Stop crying. We're going to let bygones be bygones, and try and turn over a new leaf. But what Mole says is quite true. The stoats are on guard, at every point, and they make the best sentinels in the world. It's quite useless to think of attacking the place. They're too strong for us.'

'Then it's all over,' sobbed the Toad, crying into the sofa cushions. 'I shall go and enlist for a soldier,* and never see my dear Toad Hall any more!'

'Come, cheer up, Toady!' said the Badger. 'There are more ways of getting back a place than taking it by storm. I haven't said my last word yet. Now I'm going to tell you a great secret.'

Toad sat up slowly and dried his eyes. Secrets had an immense attraction for him, because he never could keep one, and he enjoyed the sort of unhallowed thrill he experienced when he went and told another animal, after having faithfully promised not to.

'There—is—an—underground—passage,' said the Badger impressively, 'that leads from the river bank quite near here, right up into the middle of Toad Hall.'

'O, nonsense! Badger,' said Toad rather airily. 'You've been listening to some of the yarns they spin in the public-houses about here. I know every inch of Toad Hall, inside and out. Nothing of the sort, I do assure you!'

'My young friend,' said the Badger with great severity, 'your father, who was a worthy animal—a lot worthier than some others I know—was a particular friend of mine, and told me a great deal he wouldn't have dreamt of telling you. He discovered that passage—he didn't make it, of course; that was done hundreds of years before he ever came to live there—and he repaired it and cleaned it out, because he thought it might come in useful some day, in case of trouble or danger; and he showed it to me. "Don't let my son know about it," he said. "He's a good boy, but very light and volatile in character and simply cannot hold his tongue. If he's ever in a real fix, and it would be of use to him, you may tell him about the secret passage; but not before."''

The other animals looked hard at Toad to see how he would take it. Toad was inclined to be sulky at first; but he brightened up immediately, like the good fellow he was.

'Well, well,' he said; 'perhaps I am a bit of a talker. A popular fellow such as I am—my friends get round me—we chaff, we sparkle, we tell witty stories—and somehow my tongue gets wagging. I have the gift of conversation. I've been told I ought to have a *salon*, whatever that may be. Never mind. Go on, Badger. How's this passage of yours going to help us?'

'I've found out a thing or two lately,' continued the Badger. 'I got Otter to disguise himself as a sweep and call at the back door with brushes over his shoulder, asking for a job. There's going to be a big banquet to-morrow night. It's somebody's birthday—the Chief Weasel's, I believe—and all the weasels will be gathered together in the dining-hall, eating and drinking and laughing and carrying on, suspecting nothing. No guns, no swords, no sticks, no arms of any sort whatever!'

'But the sentinels will be posted as usual,' remarked the Rat.

'Exactly,' said the Badger; 'that is my point. The weasels will trust entirely to their excellent sentinels. And that is where the passage comes in. That very useful tunnel leads right up under the butler's pantry, next to the dining-hall!'

'Aha! that squeaky board in the butler's pantry!' said Toad. 'Now I understand it!'

‘We shall creep out quietly into the butler’s pantry—’ cried the Mole.

‘—with our pistols and swords and sticks—’ shouted the Rat.

‘—and rush in upon them,’ said the Badger.

‘—and whack ’em, and whack ’em, and whack ’em!’ cried the Toad in ecstasy, running round and round the room, and jumping over the chairs.

‘Very well, then,’ said the Badger, resuming his usual dry manner, ‘our plan is settled, and there’s nothing more for you to argue and squabble about. So, as it’s getting very late, all of you go right off to bed at once. We will make all the necessary arrangements in the course of the morning to-morrow.’

Toad, of course, went off to bed dutifully with the rest—he knew better than to refuse—though he was feeling much too excited to sleep. But he had had a long day, with many events crowded into it; and sheets and blankets were very friendly and comforting things, after plain straw, and not too much of it, spread on the stone floor of a draughty cell; and his head had not been many seconds on his pillow before he was snoring happily. Naturally, he dreamt a good deal; about roads that ran away from him just when he wanted them, and canals that chased him and caught him, and a barge that sailed into the banqueting-hall with his week’s washing, just as he was giving a dinner-party; and he was alone in the secret passage, pushing onwards, but it twisted and turned round and shook itself, and sat up on its end; yet somehow, at the last, he found himself back in Toad Hall, safe and triumphant, with all his friends gathered round about him, earnestly assuring him that he really was a clever Toad.

He slept till a late hour next morning, and by the time he got down he found that the other animals had finished their breakfast some time before. The Mole had slipped off somewhere by himself, without telling any one where he was going. The Badger sat in the arm-chair, reading the paper, and not concerning himself in the slightest about what was going to happen that very evening. The Rat, on the other hand, was running round the room busily, with his arms full of weapons of every kind, distributing them in four little heaps on the floor, and saying excitedly under his breath, as he ran, ‘Here’s-a-sword-for-the-Rat, here’s-a-sword-for-the-Mole, here’s-a-sword-for-the-Toad, here’s-a-sword-for-the-Badger! Here’s-a-pistol-for-the-Rat, here’s-a-pistol-for-the-Mole, here’s-a-pistol-for-the-Toad,

here's-a-pistol-for-the-Badger!' And so on, in a regular, rhythmical way, while the four little heaps gradually grew and grew.

'That's all very well, Rat,' said the Badger presently, looking at the busy little animal over the edge of his newspaper; 'I'm not blaming you. But just let us once get past the stoats, with those detestable guns of theirs, and I assure you we shan't want any swords or pistols. We four, with our sticks, once we're inside the dining-hall, why, we shall clear the floor of all the lot of them in five minutes. I'd have done the whole thing by myself, only I didn't want to deprive you fellows of the fun!'

'It's as well to be on the safe side,' said the Rat reflectively, polishing a pistol-barrel on his sleeve and looking along it.

The Toad, having finished his breakfast, picked up a stout stick and swung it vigorously, belabouring imaginary animals. 'I'll learn 'em to steal my house!' he cried. 'I'll learn 'em, I'll learn 'em!'

'Don't say "learn 'em", Toad,' said the Rat, greatly shocked. 'It's not good English.'

'What are you always nagging at Toad for?' inquired the Badger rather peevisly. 'What's the matter with his English? It's the same what I use myself, and if it's good enough for me, it ought to be good enough for you!'

'I'm very sorry,' said the Rat humbly. 'Only I *think* it ought to be "teach 'em", not "learn 'em".'

'But we dont *want* to teach 'em,' replied the Badger. 'We want to *learn* 'em—learn 'em, learn 'em! And what's more, we're going to *do* it, too!'

'O, very well, have it your own way,' said the Rat. He was getting rather muddled about it himself, and presently he retired into a corner, where he could be heard muttering, 'Learn 'em, teach 'em, teach 'em, learn 'em!' till the Badger told him rather sharply to leave off.

Presently the Mole came tumbling into the room, evidently very pleased with himself. 'I've been having such fun!' he began at once; 'I've been getting a rise out of the stoats!'

'I hope you've been very careful, Mole?' said the Rat anxiously.

'I should hope so, too,' said the Mole confidently. 'I got the idea when I went into the kitchen, to see about Toad's breakfast being kept hot for him. I found that old washerwoman-dress that he came home in yesterday, hanging on a towel-horse before the fire. So I put it on, and the bonnet as well, and the shawl, and off I went to Toad Hall,

as bold as you please. The sentries were on the look-out, of course, with their guns and their "Who comes there?" and all the rest of their nonsense. "Good morning, gentlemen!" says I, very respectful. "Want any washing done to-day?"

"They looked at me very proud and stiff and haughty, and said, "Go away, washerwoman! We don't do any washing on duty." "Or any other time?" says I. Ho, ho, ho! Wasn't I *funny*, Toad?"

"Poor, frivolous animal!" said Toad very loftily. The fact is, he felt exceedingly jealous of Mole for what he had just done. It was exactly what he would have liked to have done himself, if only he had thought of it first, and hadn't gone and overslept himself.

'Some of the stoats turned quite pink,' continued the Mole, 'and the sergeant in charge, he said to me, very short, he said, "Now run away, my good woman, run away! Don't keep my men idling and talking on their posts." "Run away?" says I; "it won't be me that'll be running away, in a very short time from now!"'

'O, *Moly*, how could you?' said the Rat, dismayed.

The Badger laid down his paper.

'I could see them pricking up their ears and looking at each other,' went on the Mole; 'and the sergeant said to them, "Never mind *her*; she doesn't know what she's talking about."

"O! don't I?" said I. "Well, let me tell you this. My daughter, she washes for Mr. Badger, and that'll show you whether I know what I'm talking about; and *you'll* know pretty soon, too! A hundred bloodthirsty badgers, armed with rifles, are going to attack Toad Hall this very night, by way of the paddock. Six boat-loads of rats, with pistols and cutlasses, will come up the river and effect a landing in the garden; while a picked body of toads, known as the Die-hards, or the Death-or-Glory Toads, will storm the orchard and carry everything before them, yelling for vengeance. There won't be much left to wash, by the time they've done with you, unless you clear out while you have the chance!" Then I ran away, and when I was out of sight I hid; and presently I came creeping back along the ditch and took a peep at them through the hedge. They were all as nervous and flustered as could be, running all ways at once, and falling over each other, and every one giving orders to everybody else and not listening; and the sergeant kept sending off parties of stoats to distant parts of the grounds, and then sending other fellows to fetch 'em back again; and I heard them saying to each other, "That's *just* like the weasels; they're

to stop comfortably in the banqueting-hall, and have feasting and toasts and songs and all sorts of fun, while we must stay on guard in the cold and the dark, and in the end be cut to pieces by blood-thirsty Badgers!"

'O, you silly ass, Mole!' cried Toad. 'You've been and spoilt everything!'

'Mole,' said the Badger, in his dry, quiet way, 'I perceive you have more sense in your little finger than some other animals have in the whole of their fat bodies. You have managed excellently, and I begin to have great hopes of you. Good Mole! Clever Mole!'

The Toad was simply wild with jealousy, more especially as he couldn't make out for the life of him what the Mole had done that was so particularly clever; but, fortunately for him, before he could show temper or expose himself to the Badger's sarcasm, the bell rang for luncheon.

It was a simple but sustaining meal—bacon and broad beans, and a macaroni pudding; and when they had quite done, the Badger settled himself into an arm-chair, and said, 'Well, we've got our work cut out for us to-night, and it will probably be pretty late before we're quite through with it; so I'm just going to take forty winks, while I can.' And he drew a handkerchief over his face and was soon snoring.

The anxious and laborious Rat at once resumed his preparations, and started running between his four little heaps, muttering, 'Here's-a-belt-for-the-Rat, here's-a-belt-for-the-Mole, here's-a belt-for-the-Toad, here's-a-belt-for-the-Badger!' and so on, with every fresh accoutrement he produced, to which there seemed really no end; so the Mole drew his arm through Toad's, led him out into the open air, shoved him into a wicker chair, and made him tell all his adventures from beginning to end, which Toad was only too willing to do. The Mole was a good listener, and Toad, with no one to check his statements or to criticise in an unfriendly spirit, rather let himself go. Indeed, much that he related belonged more properly to the category of *what-might-have-happened-had-I-only-thought-of-it-in-time-instead-of-ten-minutes-afterwards*. Those are always the best and the raciest adventures; and why should they not be truly ours, as much as the somewhat inadequate things that really come off?

THE RETURN OF ULYSSES*

WHEN it began to grow dark, the Rat, with an air of excitement and mystery, summoned them back into the parlour, stood each of them alongside of his little heap, and proceeded to dress them up* for the coming expedition. He was very earnest and thorough-going about it, and the affair took quite a long time. First, there was a belt to go round each animal, and then a sword to be stuck in each belt, and then a cutlass on the other side to balance it. Then a pair of pistols, a policeman's truncheon, several sets of handcuffs, some bandages and sticking-plaster, and a flask and a sandwich-case. The Badger laughed good-humouredly and said, 'All right, Ratty! It amuses you and it doesn't hurt me. I'm going to do all I've got to do with this here stick.' But the Rat only said, '*Please*, Badger! You know I shouldn't like you to blame me afterwards and say I had forgotten *anything*!'

When all was quite ready, the Badger took a dark lantern in one paw, grasped his great stick with the other, and said, 'Now then, follow me! Mole first, 'cos I'm very pleased with him; Rat next; Toad last. And look here, Toady! Don't you chatter so much as usual, or you'll be sent back, as sure as fate!'

The Toad was so anxious not to be left out that he took up the inferior position assigned to him without a murmur, and the animals set off. The Badger led them along by the river for a little way, and then suddenly swung himself over the edge into a hole in the river bank, a little above the water. The Mole and the Rat followed silently, swinging themselves successfully into the hole as they had seen the Badger do; but when it came to Toad's turn, of course he managed to slip and fall into the water with a loud splash and a squeal of alarm. He was hauled out by his friends, rubbed down and wrung out hastily, comforted, and set on his legs; but the Badger was seriously angry, and told him that the very next time he made a fool of himself he would most certainly be left behind.

So at last they were in the secret passage, and the cutting-out expedition* had really begun!

It was cold, and dark, and damp, and low, and narrow, and poor Toad began to shiver, partly from dread of what might be before him,

partly because he was wet through. The lantern was far ahead, and he could not help lagging behind a little in the darkness. Then he heard the Rat call out warningly, 'Come on, Toad!' and a terror seized him of being left behind, alone in the darkness, and he 'came on' with such a rush that he upset the Rat into the Mole and the Mole into the Badger, and for a moment all was confusion. The Badger thought they were being attacked from behind, and, as there was no room to use a stick or a cutlass, drew a pistol, and was on the point of putting a bullet into Toad. When he found out what had really happened he was very angry indeed, and said, 'Now this time that tiresome Toad *shall* be left behind!'

But Toad whimpered, and the other two promised that they would be answerable for his good conduct, and at last the Badger was pacified, and the procession moved on; only this time the Rat brought up the rear, with a firm grip on the shoulder of Toad.

So they groped and shuffled along, with their ears pricked up and their paws on their pistols, till at last the Badger said, 'We ought by now to be pretty nearly under the Hall.'

Then suddenly they heard, far away as it might be, and yet apparently nearly over their heads, a confused murmur of sound, as if people were shouting and cheering and stamping on the floor and hammering on tables. The Toad's nervous terrors all returned, but the Badger only remarked placidly, 'They *are* going it, the weasels!'

The passage now began to slope upwards; they groped onward a little further, and then the noise broke out again, quite distinct this time, and very close above them. 'Ooo-ray-oo-ray-oo-ray-ooray!' they heard, and the stamping of little feet on the floor, and the clinking of glasses as little fists pounded on the table. 'What a time they're having!' said the Badger. 'Come on!' They hurried along the passage till it came to a full stop, and they found themselves standing under the trap-door that led up into the butler's pantry.

Such a tremendous noise was going on in the banqueting-hall that there was little danger of their being overheard. The Badger said, 'Now, boys, all together!' and the four of them put their shoulders to the trap-door and heaved it back. Hoisting each other up, they found themselves standing in the pantry, with only a door between them and the banqueting-hall, where their unconscious enemies were carousing.

The noise, as they emerged from the passage, was simply deafening. At last, as the cheering and hammering slowly subsided, a voice could

be made out saying, 'Well, I do not propose to detain you much longer'—(great applause)—'but before I resume my seat'—(renewed cheering)—'I should like to say one word about our kind host, Mr. Toad. We all know Toad!'—(great laughter)—'*Good Toad, modest Toad, honest Toad!*' (shrieks of merriment).

'Only just let me get at him!' muttered Toad, grinding his teeth.

'Hold hard a minute!' said the Badger, restraining him with difficulty. 'Get ready, all of you!'

'—Let me sing you a little song,' went on the voice, 'which I have composed on the subject of Toad'—(prolonged applause).

Then the Chief Weasel—for it was he—began in a high, squeaky voice:

'Toad he went a-pleasuring
Gaily down the street—'

The Badger drew himself up, took a firm grip of his stick with both paws, glanced round at his comrades, and cried—

'The hour is come! Follow me!'

And flung the door open wide.

My!

What a squealing and a squeaking and a screeching filled the air!

Well might the terrified weasels dive under the tables and spring madly up at the windows! Well might the ferrets rush wildly for the fireplace and get hopelessly jammed in the chimney! Well might tables and chairs be upset, and glass and china be sent crashing on the floor, in the panic of that terrible moment when the four Heroes strode wrathfully into the room! The mighty Badger, his whiskers bristling, his great cudgel whistling through the air; Mole, black and grim, brandishing his stick and shouting his awful war-cry, 'A Mole! A Mole!' Rat, desperate and determined, his belt bulging with weapons of every age and every variety; Toad, frenzied with excitement and injured pride, swollen to twice his ordinary size, leaping into the air and emitting Toad-whoops that chilled them to the marrow! 'Toad he went a-pleasuring!' he yelled. '*T//* pleasure 'em!' and he went straight for the Chief Weasel. They were but four in all, but to the panic-stricken weasels the hall seemed full of monstrous animals, grey, black, brown, and yellow, whooping and flourishing enormous cudgels; and they broke and fled with squeals of terror and dismay, this way and that, through the windows, up the chimney, anywhere to get out of reach of those terrible sticks.

The affair was soon over. Up and down, the whole length of the hall, strode the four Friends, whacking with their sticks at every head that showed itself; and in five minutes the room was cleared. Through the broken windows the shrieks of terrified weasels escaping across the lawn were borne faintly to their ears; on the floor lay prostrate some dozen or so of the enemy, on whom the Mole was busily engaged in fitting handcuffs. The Badger, resting from his labours, leant on his stick and wiped his honest brow.

'Mole,' he said, 'you're the best of fellows! Just cut along outside and look after those stoat-sentries of yours, and see what they're doing. I've an idea that, thanks to you, we shan't have much trouble from *them* to-night!'

The Mole vanished promptly through a window; and the Badger bade the other two set a table on its legs again, pick up knives and forks and plates and glasses from the *débris* on the floor, and see if they could find materials for a supper. 'I want some grub, I do,' he said, in that rather common way he had of speaking. 'Stir your stumps, Toad, and look lively! We've got your house back for you, and you don't offer us so much as a sandwich.'

Toad felt rather hurt that the Badger didn't say pleasant things to him, as he had to the Mole, and tell him what a fine fellow he was, and how splendidly he had fought; for he was rather particularly pleased with himself and the way he had gone for the Chief Weasel and sent him flying across the table with one blow of his stick. But he bustled about, and so did the Rat, and soon they found some guava jelly in a glass dish, and a cold chicken, a tongue that had hardly been touched, some trifle, and quite a lot of lobster salad; and in the pantry they came upon a basketful of French rolls and any quantity of cheese, butter, and celery. They were just about to sit down when the Mole clambered in through the window, chuckling, with an armful of rifles.

'It's all over,' he reported. 'From what I can make out, as soon as the stoats, who were very nervous and jumpy already, heard the shrieks and the yells and the uproar inside the hall, some of them threw down their rifles and fled. The others stood fast for a bit, but when the weasels came rushing out upon them they thought they were betrayed; and the stoats grappled with the weasels, and the weasels fought to get away, and they wrestled and wriggled and punched each other, and rolled over and over, till most of 'em rolled into the river! They've all disappeared by now, one way or another; and I've got their rifles. So *that's* all right!'

‘Excellent and deserving animal!’ said the Badger, his mouth full of chicken and trifle. ‘Now, there’s just one more thing I want you to do, Mole, before you sit down to your supper along of us; and I wouldn’t trouble you only I know I can trust you to see a thing done, and I wish I could say the same of every one I know. I’d send Rat, if he wasn’t a poet. I want you to take those fellows on the floor there upstairs with you, and have some bedrooms cleaned out and tidied up and made really comfortable. See that they sweep *under* the beds, and put clean sheets and pillow-cases on, and turn down one corner of the bed-clothes, just as you know it ought to be done; and have a can of hot water, and clean towels, and fresh cakes of soap, put in each room. And then you can give them a licking apiece, if it’s any satisfaction to you, and put them out by the back door, and we shan’t see any more of *them*, I fancy. And then come along and have some of this cold tongue. It’s first-rate. I’m very pleased with you, Mole!’

The good-natured Mole picked up a stick, formed his prisoners up in a line on the floor, gave them the order ‘Quick march!’ and led his squad off to the upper floor. After a time, he appeared again, smiling, and said that every room was ready, and as clean as a new pin. ‘And I didn’t have to lick them, either,’ he added. ‘I thought, on the whole, they had had licking enough for one night, and the weasels, when I put the point to them, quite agreed with me, and said they wouldn’t think of troubling me. They were very penitent, and said they were extremely sorry for what they had done, but it was all the fault of the Chief Weasel and the stoats, and if ever they could do anything for us at any time to make up, we had only got to mention it. So I gave them a roll apiece, and let them out at the back, and off they ran, as hard as they could!’

Then the Mole pulled his chair up to the table, and pitched into the cold tongue; and Toad, like the gentleman he was, put all his jealousy from him, and said heartily, ‘Thank you kindly, dear Mole, for all your pains and trouble to-night, and especially for your cleverness this morning!’ The Badger was pleased at that, and said, ‘There spoke my brave Toad!’ So they finished their supper in great joy and contentment, and presently retired to rest between clean sheets, safe in Toad’s ancestral home, won back by matchless valour, consummate strategy, and a proper handling of sticks.

The following morning, Toad, who had overslept himself as usual, came down to breakfast disgracefully late, and found on the table

a certain quantity of egg-shells, some fragments of cold and leathery toast, a coffee-pot three-fourths empty, and really very little else; which did not tend to improve his temper, considering that, after all, it was his own house. Through the French windows of the breakfast-room he could see the Mole and the Water Rat sitting in wicker chairs out on the lawn, evidently telling each other stories; roaring with laughter and kicking their short legs up in the air. The Badger, who was in an arm-chair and deep in the morning paper, merely looked up and nodded when Toad entered the room. But Toad knew his man, so he sat down and made the best breakfast he could, merely observing to himself that he would get square with the others sooner or later. When he had nearly finished, the Badger looked up and remarked rather shortly: 'I'm sorry, Toad, but I'm afraid there's a heavy morning's work in front of you. You see, we really ought to have a Banquet at once, to celebrate this affair. It's expected of you—in fact, it's the rule.'

'O, all right!' said the Toad readily. 'Anything to oblige. Though why on earth you should want to have a Banquet in the morning I cannot understand. But you know I do not live to please myself, but merely to find out what my friends want, and then try and arrange it for 'em, you dear old Badger!'

'Don't pretend to be stupider than you really are,' replied the Badger crossly: 'and don't chuckle and splutter in your coffee while you're talking; it's not manners. What I mean is, the Banquet will be at night, of course, but the invitations will have to be written and got off at once, and you've got to write 'em. Now, sit down at that table—there's stacks of letter-paper on it, with "Toad Hall" at the top in blue and gold—and write invitations to all our friends, and if you stick to it we shall get them out before luncheon. And I'll bear a hand too, and take my share of the burden. I'll order the Banquet.'

'What!' cried Toad, dismayed. 'Me stop indoors and write a lot of rotten letters on a jolly morning like this, when I want to go around my property, and set everything and everybody to rights, and swagger about and enjoy myself! Certainly not! I'll be—I'll see you—Stop a minute, though! Why, of course, dear Badger! What is my pleasure or convenience compared with that of others! You wish it done, and it shall be done. Go, Badger, order the Banquet, order what you like; then join our young friends outside in their innocent mirth, oblivious of me and my cares and toils. I sacrifice this fair morning on the altar of duty and friendship!'

The Badger looked at him very suspiciously, but Toad's frank, open countenance made it difficult to suggest any unworthy motive in this change of attitude. He quitted the room, accordingly, in the direction of the kitchen, and as soon as the door had closed behind him, Toad hurried to the writing-table. A fine idea had occurred to him while he was talking. He *would* write the invitations; and he would take care to mention the leading part he had taken in the fight, and how he had laid the Chief Weasel flat; and he would hint at his adventures, and what a career of triumph he had to tell about; and on the fly leaf he would give a sort of programme of entertainment for the evening—something like this, as he sketched it out in his head:

SPEECH BY TOAD

(There will be other speeches by TOAD
during the evening)

ADDRESS BY TOAD

SYNOPSIS—Our Prison System—The Waterways of Old
England—Horse-dealing, and how to deal—Property,
its rights and its duties—Back to the Land—A Typical
English Squire

SONG BY TOAD

(*Composed by himself*)

OTHER COMPOSITIONS BY TOAD

will be sung in the course of the
evening by the . . . COMPOSER

The idea pleased him mightily, and he worked very hard and got all the letters finished by noon, at which hour it was reported to him that there was a small and rather bedraggled weasel at the door, inquiring timidly whether he could be of any service to the gentlemen. Toad swaggered out and found it was one of the prisoners of the previous evening, very respectful and anxious to please. He patted him on the head, shoved the bundle of invitations into his paw, and told him to cut along quick and deliver them as fast as he could, and if he liked to come back again in the evening perhaps there might be a shilling for him, or, again, perhaps there mightn't; and the poor weasel seemed really quite grateful, and hurried off eagerly to do his mission.

When the other animals came back to luncheon, very boisterous and breezy after a morning on the river, the Mole, whose conscience

had been pricking him, looked doubtfully at Toad, expecting to find him sulky or depressed. Instead, he was so uppish and inflated that the Mole began to suspect something; while the Rat and the Badger exchanged significant glances.

As soon as the meal was over, Toad thrust his paws deep into his trouser-pockets, remarked casually, 'Well, look after yourselves, you fellows! Ask for anything you want!' and was swaggering off in the direction of the garden where he wanted to think out an idea or two for his coming speeches, when the Rat caught him by the arm.

Toad rather suspected what he was after, and did his best to get away; but when the Badger took him firmly by the other arm he began to see that the game was up. The two animals conducted him between them into the small smoking-room that opened out of the entrance-hall, shut the door, and put him into a chair. Then they both stood in front of him, while Toad sat silent and regarded them with much suspicion and ill-humour.

'Now, look here, Toad,' said the Rat. 'It's about this Banquet, and very sorry I am to have to speak to you like this. But we want you to understand clearly, once and for all, that there are going to be no speeches and no songs. Try and grasp the fact that on this occasion we're not arguing with you; we're just telling you.'

Toad saw that he was trapped. They understood him, they saw through him, they had got ahead of him. His pleasant dream was shattered.

'Mayn't I sing them just one *little* song?' he pleaded piteously.

'No, not *one* little song,' replied the Rat firmly, though his heart bled as he noticed the trembling lip of the poor disappointed Toad. 'It's no good, Toady; you know well that your songs are all conceit and boasting and vanity; and your speeches are all self-praise and—and—well, and gross exaggeration and—and—'

'And gas,' put in the Badger, in his common way.

'It's for your own good, Toady,' went on the Rat. 'You know you *must* turn over a new leaf sooner or later, and now seems a splendid time to begin; a sort of turning-point in your career. Please don't think that saying all this doesn't hurt me more than it hurts you.'

Toad remained a long while plunged in thought. At last he raised his head, and the traces of strong emotion were visible on his features. 'You have conquered, my friends,' he said in broken accents. 'It was, to be sure, but a small thing that I asked—merely leave to blossom

and expand for yet one more evening,* to let myself go and hear the tumultuous applause that always seems to me—somehow—to bring out my best qualities. However, you are right, I know, and I am wrong. Henceforth I will be a very different Toad. My friends, you shall never have occasion to blush for me again. But, O dear, O dear, this is a hard world!’

And, pressing his handkerchief to his face, he left the room with faltering footsteps.

‘Badger,’ said the Rat, ‘I feel like a brute; I wonder what *you* feel like?’

‘O, I know, I know,’ said the Badger gloomily. ‘But the thing had to be done. This good fellow has got to live here, and hold his own, and be respected. Would you have him a common laughing-stock, mocked and jeered at by stoats and weasels?’

‘Of course not,’ said the Rat. ‘And, talking of weasels, it’s lucky we came upon that little weasel, just as he was setting out with Toad’s invitations. I suspected something from what you told me, and had a look at one or two; they were simply disgraceful. I confiscated the lot, and the good Mole is now sitting in the blue *boudoir*, filling up plain, simple invitation cards.’

* * * * *

At last the hour for the banquet began to draw near, and Toad, who on leaving the others had retired to his bedroom, was still sitting there, melancholy and thoughtful. His brow resting on his paw, he pondered long and deeply. Gradually his countenance cleared, and he began to smile long, slow smiles. Then he took to giggling in a shy, self-conscious manner. At last he got up, locked the door, drew the curtains across the windows, collected all the chairs in the room and arranged them in a semicircle, and took up his position in front of them, swelling visibly. Then he bowed, coughed twice, and, letting himself go, with uplifted voice he sang, to the enraptured audience that his imagination so clearly saw,

TOAD’S LAST LITTLE SONG!

The Toad—came—home!
 There was panic in the parlour and howling in the hall,
 There was crying in the cow-shed and shrieking in the stall,
 When the Toad—came—home!

When the Toad—came—home!
There was smashing in of window and crashing in of door,
There was chivvying of weasels that fainted on the floor,
When the Toad—came—home!

Bang! go the drums!
The trumpeters are tooting and the soldiers are saluting,
And the cannon they are shooting and the motor-cars are hooting,
As the—Hero—comes!

Shout—Hoo-ray!
And let each one of the crowd try and shout it very loud,
In honour of an animal of whom you're justly proud,
For it's Toad's—great—day!

He sang this very loud, with great unction and expression; and when he had done, he sang it all over again.

Then he heaved a deep sigh; a long, long, long sigh.

Then he dipped his hairbrush in the water-jug, parted his hair in the middle, and plastered it down very straight and sleek on each side of his face; and, unlocking the door, went quietly down the stairs to greet his guests, who he knew must be assembling in the drawing-room.

All the animals cheered when he entered, and crowded round to congratulate him and say nice things about his courage, and his cleverness, and his fighting qualities; but Toad only smiled faintly and murmured, 'Not at all!' Or, sometimes, for a change, 'On the contrary!' Otter, who was standing on the hearthrug, describing to an admiring circle of friends exactly how he would have managed things had he been there, came forward with a shout, threw his arm round Toad's neck, and tried to take him round the room in triumphal progress; but Toad, in a mild way, was rather snubby to him, remarking gently, as he disengaged himself, 'Badger's was the mastermind; the Mole and the Water Rat bore the brunt of the fighting; I merely served in the ranks and did little or nothing.' The animals were evidently puzzled and taken aback by this unexpected attitude of his; and Toad felt, as he moved from one guest to the other, making his modest responses, that he was an object of absorbing interest to every one.

The Badger had ordered everything of the best, and the banquet was a great success. There was much talking and laughter and chaff

among the animals, but through it all Toad, who of course was in the chair, looked down his nose and murmured pleasant nothings to the animals on either side of him. At intervals he stole a glance at the Badger and the Rat, and always when he looked they were staring at each other with their mouths open; and this gave him the greatest satisfaction.* Some of the younger and livelier animals, as the evening wore on, got whispering to each other that things were not so amusing as they used to be in the good old days; and there were some knockings on the table and cries of 'Toad! Speech! Speech from Toad! Song! Mr. Toad's Song!' But Toad only shook his head gently, raised one paw in mild protest, and, by pressing delicacies on his guests, by topical small-talk, and by earnest inquiries after members of their families not yet old enough to appear at social functions, managed to convey to them that this dinner was being run on strictly conventional lines.

He was indeed an altered Toad!*

* * * * *

After this climax, the four animals continued to lead their lives, so rudely broken in upon by civil war, in great joy and contentment, undisturbed by further risings or invasions. Toad, after due consultation with his friends, selected a handsome gold chain and locket set with pearls, which he dispatched to the gaoler's daughter with a letter that even the Badger admitted to be modest, grateful, and appreciative; and the engine-driver, in his turn, was properly thanked and compensated for all his pains and trouble. Under severe compulsion from the Badger, even the barge-woman was, with some trouble, sought out and the value of her horse discreetly made good to her; though Toad kicked terribly at this, holding himself to be an instrument of Fate, sent to punish fat women with mottled arms who couldn't tell a real gentleman when they saw one. The amount involved, it was true, was not very burdensome, the gipsy's valuation being admitted by local assessors to be approximately correct.

Sometimes, in the course of long summer evenings, the friends would take a stroll together in the Wild Wood, now successfully tamed so far as they were concerned; and it was pleasing to see how respectfully they were greeted by the inhabitants, and how the mother-weasels would bring their young ones to the mouths of their holes, and say, pointing, 'Look, baby! There goes the great Mr. Toad! And that's the

gallant Water Rat, a terrible fighter, walking along o' him! And yonder comes the famous Mr. Mole, of whom you so often have heard your father tell!' But when their infants were fractious and quite beyond control, they would quiet them by telling how, if they didn't hush them and not fret them,* the terrible grey Badger would up and get them. This was a base libel on Badger, who, though he cared little about Society, was rather fond of children; but it never failed to have its full effect.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

Bennett	Alan Bennett, <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> (London: Faber and Faber, 1991).
Chalmers	Patrick R. Chalmers, <i>Kenneth Grahame: Life, Letters and Unpublished Work</i> (London: Methuen, 1933).
<i>First Whisper</i>	Elsbeth Grahame (ed.), <i>First Whisper of 'The Wind in the Willows'</i> (London: Methuen, 1944).
Green	Peter Green, <i>Kenneth Grahame, 1859–1932: A Study of His Life, Work and Times</i> (London: John Murray, 1959).
SOED	<i>Shorter Oxford English Dictionary</i> .

[*Title*]: Graham Robertson also suggested: *The Lapping of the Stream, The Babble of the Stream, 'By Pleasant Streams'* (Blake), *'By Waters Fair'*, (Blake), *The Whispering Reeds, In the Sedges, Under the Alders, Reeds and Rushes, Reeds of the River, River Folk, The Children of Pan . . .* (Chalmers, 126).

- 5 *waiting to put on his coat*: a Mole lift-attendant appears in 'Bertie's Escapade', a short story written by Grahame for the family magazine *The Merry Thought*, and first published in *First Whispers* (pp. 41–7). The Mole is persuaded to have supper with Bertie the pig: 'it was three o'clock in the morning before the mole slipped through the palings and made his way back to his own home, where Mrs. Mole was sitting up for him, in some uneasiness of mind' (p. 45).

breezes caressed his heated brow: the first of many echoes of the Romantic poets, possibly from the opening of William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1805):

Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze
That blows from the green fields and from the clouds
And from the sky: it beats against my cheek,
And seems half conscious of the joy it gives. . . .
A captive greets thee, coming from a house
Of bondage . . .
 . . . In what Vale
Shall be my harbour? Underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home, and what sweet stream
Shall with its murmur lull me to my rest?
 . . . whither shall I turn

By road or pathway or through open field,
Or shall a twig or any floating thing
Upon the river, point me out my course?

- 5 *carol*: a song, now usually with a joyous strain (*SOED*).

Onion-sauce: Mrs Isabella Beeton, in her *The Book of Household Management* (1861), gives a recipe for Boiled Rabbit, which ends: ‘Dish it, and smother it either with onion, mushroom, or liver sauce, or parsley-and-butter; the former is, however, generally preferred to any of the last-named sauces’ (para. 486). Her recipe for ‘White Onion Sauce for Boiled Rabbits, Roast Shoulder of Mutton, &c’ is made from ‘9 large onions . . . 1 pint of melted butter made with milk . . . ½ teaspoonful of salt, or rather more’ (para. 484).

- 6 *a full-fed river*: In ‘The Romance of the Road’ (*National Observer*, 14 February 1891 and the first piece in *Pagan Papers*), Grahame describes a road that crosses ‘the full-fed river, lipping the meadow-sweet’. The River seems to be a combination of the Fowey River and the Thames.

insatiable sea: in Joseph Conrad’s *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897) the body of the eponymous Jimmy Wait is prepared ‘for a solemn surrender to the insatiable sea’.

- 7 *the Water Rat*: the two most popular candidates as the model for the Water Rat are Dr Frederick James Furnivall (1825–1910) and Edward Atkinson (1838?–1911). As Roger Sale put it: ‘bluff, cheerful, full of purpose when coming and going from excursions of great and active idleness, knowledgeable about where to go and what to take along, Furnivall is the Water Rat . . . [He] was a grown man, but at the same time he wasn’t; he is Rat, reflecting the excitement of being a fun-loving boy (Roger Sale, *Fairy Tales and After: From Snow White to E. B. White* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 166).

Edward Atkinson, known as ‘Atky’, was the first commodore of the Royal Fowey Yacht Club (1893–1911). In his house, ‘Rosebank’ at Mixtoun Creek, his bedroom was reached by a rope-ladder, and he collected mechanical toys. Grahame wrote to his then fiancée, Elspeth: ‘We found a dreore full of toys wot wound up, and we ad a great race between a fish, a snaik, a beetle wot flapped its wings and a rabbit’ (Joan Coombs, *A Fowey Jig-Saw: The History of the Royal Fowey Yacht Club* (Fowey: RFYC Books, 2000), 54). Shortly after Atkinson’s death by drowning (Bevil Quiller-Couch tried to save him) Grahame wrote to Austin Purves: ‘I loved Atky—perhaps in a selfish way, first of all because his special “passions” appealed to me—boats, Bohemianism, Burgundy, tramps, travel, books and pictures—but also and I hope and believe chiefly for his serene and gentle nature, his unflinching good humour and his big, kind heart’ (ibid. 91).

There is a Water-rat in ‘The Devoted Friend’ in Oscar Wilde’s *The Happy Prince and Other Stories*. It begins ‘One morning the old Water-rat put his head out of his hole. He had bright beady eyes and stiff grey whiskers . . . The little ducks were swimming about in the pond . . . and

their mother . . . was trying to teach them how to stand on their heads in the water.' The Water-rat is a bachelor, who takes the view that "Love is all very well in its way, but friendship is much higher." The Linnet tells him a moral tale about friendship.

sculled smartly: Grahame is not entirely consistent in his use of the terms oars, sculls, rowing, and sculling (strictly, rowing is with one oar, sculling is with two sculls, which are shorter than oars). F. J. Furnivall founded the Hammersmith (later Furnivall) Sculling Club in 1896 for the benefit of young women.

struck the bank full tilt: in Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* (1889, chapter 12) J., the narrator, is similarly dreamy. He is steering, and there is a page of purple prose, which ends:

We seemed like knights of some old legend, sailing across some mystic lake into the unknown realm of twilight, unto the great land of the sunset.

We didn't go into the realm of twilight; we went slap into that punt, where those three old men were fishing.

- 8 *a long day of it*: the sons of Grahame's American friend Austin Purves were convinced that this chapter 'was inspired by a boating trip up the Fowey river, by Grahame, "Atky", and their father "to a little village called Golant, on the right bank [*sic*], for tea"' (Green, 268).

painter: the mooring-rope of a boat.

fat, wicker luncheon-basket: in the unpublished story for *The Merry Thought*, 'Bertie's Escapade', Bertie promises his friends a supper of 'cold chicken, tongue, pressed beef, jellies, trifle, and champagne', and duly appears 'staggering under the weight of two baskets. One of them contained all the eatables he had already mentioned, as well as apples, oranges, chocolates, ginger, and crackers. The other contained ginger-beer, soda-water, and champagne' (*First Whisper*, 44–5). See also the story 'Dies Iræ', in *Dream Days*.

- 9 *what it doesn't know is not worth knowing*: a sentiment in direct contrast to Grahame's view in his introduction to Sir Roger L'Estrange's *One Hundred Fables of Aesop* (1899): 'A beast's life is so short, so eventful and precarious, that he is never above learning, never too proud to take a hint; more than all, he never thinks that what he doesn't know isn't worth knowing.'

so crowded nowadays: pleasure-boating on the Thames increased rapidly in the years 1880–1900. *The Lock to Lock Times* (18 August 1888) reported that 'One hears numerous complaints of the river being over-crowded: no spot untainted by the tripper; no reach safe from loud 'Arries; no seclusion possible . . . Well, I enjoyed three quiet days last week at Day's Lock [near Dorchester, between Wallingford and Abingdon] . . . no crowds, no loud roughs, no noisy cads, which surely proves that if one only has the time and energy to go up high enough, one can still enjoy the grand old river of a dozen years ago' (quoted in R. R. Bolland, *Victorians on*

the Thames (Tunbridge Wells: Parapress, 3rd edn., 1994), 16). Early photographs of the regatta at Lerryn, on a tributary of the Fowey River (sometimes claimed to be the setting for *The Wind in the Willows*), show a similarly crowded river.

dabchicks: the little grebe (*tachybaptus ruficolis*).

the Wild Wood: generally agreed to be Quarry Woods, near Cookham. E. H. Shepard, during his visit to Grahame in 1930, was told of the 'Wild Wood way up on the hill above the river' (E. H. Shepard, 'Illustrating *The Wind in the Willows*', *The Horn-Book* (April 1954), 83–6, quoted in Green, 346). Ebenezer Mac Crotchet's 'castellated villa' in Thomas Love Peacock's *Crotchet Castle* (1831) stands on the river below the woods. Another candidate is the Great Wood at the confluence of the River Fowey and the River Lerryn, upstream from Fowey.

- 10 *murmur of sound*: this recalls the second stanza of Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Keepsake Mill' in *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885):

Here is a mill with the humming of thunder,
Here is the weir with the wonder of foam,
Here is the sluice with the race running under—
Marvellous places, though handy to home!

The mill house may have been taken from a mill at Golant, on the Fowey, or the Water Mill at Mapledurham House on the Thames, two miles downstream from Pangbourne.

- 11 *togs*: clothes: 'slang, jocular and colloquial (1809)' (*SOED*).
- 12 *wager-boat*: a racing boat for a single sculler—so called because bets (wagers) were placed on it; it developed into the 'Best Boat'. In 1845 Furnivall built himself a wager boat at Cambridge, making it narrower than usual, and used outriggers.

Toad: Sir Charles Day-Rose Bt, of Hardwick House, Whitchurch (the village across the river from Pangbourne), who was a friend of Grahame's, is said by *Burke's Peerage* to have been the model for Mr Toad (107th edn., ed. Charles Mosley (2003), 3, 3393). Jocelyn Dimpleby describes him as 'an entertaining, passionate man, who was always having crazes for unusual activities . . . He was extremely proud of his large open car, a 1904 Mercedes Simplex Tourer. It had a six-cylinder engine and a very long bonnet' (*A Profound Secret* (London: Black Swan, 2004), 310). See also Nick Brazil, *Mr Toad's Village: The Story of Whitchurch-on-Thames* (DVD) (Whitchurch: Brazil Production, 2007).

There is some evidence that Grahame left the Bank of England abruptly after a 'massive row' with one of the Bank's directors (later governor) Walter Cunliffe. Grahame calculated his pension at £791 per year—he was awarded £400. Some people believed that Grahame based Toad on Cunliffe, but John Keyworth, curator of the Bank's museum, thinks that Toad is too sympathetic for this to be true (Peter Aspden, 'Row Could

Have Ended Grahame's Bank Career', *Financial Times*, 27 September 2008). Green thinks that Horatio Bottomley, the flamboyant financier, founder of the *Financial Times*, and twice expelled from parliament, 'supplied a good deal of colour to the character of Mr Toad' (pp. 242–3).

Toad and the lock-keeper: in the escapist piece 'The Eternal Whither' (*National Observer*, 9 July 1892, and *Pagan Papers*) Grahame rhapsodizes on things that 'the palefaced quilldriver' might do if he could: 'What happiness in quiet moments to tend the lock-keeper's flowerbeds—perhaps make love to his daughter'. On 10 July 1923, he wrote to one Thomas Goodman of Wing, Leighton Buzzard: 'I'm afraid I must not tell you the story about Toad and the Lock-Keeper. The fact is, they both lost their tempers, and said things they much regretted afterwards. They are now friends again, so we have all agreed to let the matter drop' (Chalmers, 143). Green claims that this letter was written by Elspeth and only signed by Kenneth (p. 339).

the May-fly was visible no more: despite Grahame's reputation among his admirers as a keen student of nature, there is some unreliable natural history in *The Wind in the Willows*. Grace M. Yoxon of the International Otter Survival Fund informs me that otters (as far as anyone knows) do not eat insects; their main diet is fish, and also birds and small mammals (such as, we might note, water voles and amphibians).

mustard pot: in Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*, three pages are devoted to packing (chapter 4): 'When George is hanged Harris will be the worst packer in this world; and I looked at the piles of plates and cups, and kettles, and bottles, and jars, and pies, and stoves, and cakes, and tomatoes, etc., and felt that the thing would soon become interesting.' In chapter 12, they find that they have forgotten the mustard, and both J. and Harris would have 'given worlds for it. . . . It would have been a good thing for anybody who had come up to that spot with a can of mustard then; he would have been set up in worlds for the rest of his life.'

- 16 *The Open Road*: a popular anthology of the period was *The Open Road, A Little Book for Wayfarers* (1899) by E. V. Lucas (1868–1938), who became chairman of Methuen in 1924. It had gone through fourteen editions by 1908. Its 'Argument' begins: 'This little book aims at nothing but providing companionship on the road for city-dwellers who make holiday . . . It is just a garland of good or enkindling poetry and prose fitted to urge folk into the open air'. Represented were 'the Greek Anthology', Shelley's 'Hymn of Pan', Richard Jefferies' 'The Hill Pantheist' from *The Story of My Heart*, and Walt Whitman's 'Song of the Open Road'.

Up tails all!: 'Up Tails All' was a popular tune and dance in the early seventeenth century *Fitzwilliam Virginals Book* (in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge), set by Giles Farnaby (c.1563–1640). It also appears in *The Dancing Master* (1651), *Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1707, 1719), and other collections. It was a favourite tune of the cavalier poet Robert Herrick

(1591–1674); his poem ‘Up Tails All’ seems to use the expression as a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Grahame included five of Herrick’s poems in his *Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children* (1916) and gave Herrick as ‘the most striking example’ of a poet whose ‘appeal is probably as fresh today as when their works first appeared’ (Chalmers, 309).

- 17 *he has got some great qualities, has Toady*: Alan Bennett notes: ‘When I first read the book it seemed to me that Grahame meant Toad to be Jewish. He had endowed him with all the faults that genteel Edwardian anti-Semitism attributed to *nouveaux-riches* Jews. He is loud and shows off; he has too much money for his own good and no sense of social responsibility to go with it . . . I thought that Grahame must have been thinking of characters like Sir Ernest Cassel and the Sassoons, the friends and financiers of Edward VII, who moved at the highest levels of society but were still regarded as outsiders’ (Bennett, p. xx). A similar character, young Mr Meyer, appears briefly in ‘The Treasure and the Law’, in Rudyard Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906).

down to the water’s edge: candidates for Toad Hall include Harleyford Manor, a redbrick Georgian house, designed by Robert Taylor in the late 1740s, and located about three miles upstream from Marlowe—although there are no mullioned windows and no boathouse; Mapledurham House, an Elizabethan manor house, two miles downstream from Pangbourne, and which may have been the model for E. H. Shepard’s illustration; and Cliveden, an Italianate mansion, a mile downstream from Cookham (although it is built of white stone).

There is a strong case for Hardwick House, at Whitchurch-on-Thames, across the river from Pangbourne. On 22 December 1930, Grahame replied to a girl named Joyce at Whitchurch P. School: ‘It is very pleasant to think that you and your friends at Whitchurch like the book, because there is just as much of Oxfordshire and Berkshire in it, isn’t there? And some of the animals must have lived on one side of the river and some on the other, but I have always felt sure that Toad Hall was on the Oxfordshire side’ (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 527: 170). Hardwick House is described in the Diaries of Mrs Lybbe Powys (1762): ‘Situated on a grassy slope leading down to the river . . . its exterior presents a crowd of picturesque gables, surmounted by the quaint clock-tower, rising from mellowed red walls, adorned with stone-mullioned windows’ (*Passages from the Diaries of Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys of Hardwick House, Oxon. AD 1756–1808*, ed. Emily J. Climençon (London: Longmans Green, 1899), 99). This house is also described in the first chapter of Henry James’s *Portrait of a Lady* (1881):

It stood upon a low hill, above the river—the river being the Thames at some forty miles from London. A long gabled front of red brick, with the complexion of which time and the weather had played all sorts of pictorial tricks, only however, to improve and refine it, presented to the lawn its patches of ivy, its clustered chimneys, its windows smothered in creepers.

Jocelyn Dimbleby notes that ‘Kenneth Grahame often came to Hardwick [where] he used to lie on his tummy on the river bank, with his head over the side, watching the water rats . . . Certainly the image of Hardwick at that time is echoed in *The Wind in the Willows*: the river bank with its animals, the large, rather crazy host who was mad keen on motor cars, and even the Wild Wood just near by’ (*A Profound Secret* (London: Black Swan, 2004), 310). Bisham Abbey near Marlow is another possible model (see Roger A. Oaks, ‘Where is Toad Hall?’ (*Riverbank News* (The Kenneth Grahame Society), 2/1 (June 2009)), 2–4).

No landing allowed: in Jerome K. Jerome’s *Three Men in a Boat* (chapter 8), J., the narrator, has an extended diatribe about ‘the selfishness of the riparian proprietor . . . If these men had their way they would close the River Thames altogether . . . The sight of these notice-boards rouses every evil instinct in my nature. I feel I want to tear each one down, and hammer it over the head of the man who put it up, until I have killed him, and then I would bury him, and put the board up over the grave as a tombstone.’ Harris would go further, and sing his comic songs over the grave, which J. thinks is too bloodthirsty.

- 19 *and red wheels*: gipsy carts, as Grahame notes in ‘A Bohemian in Exile’ (*St James Gazette*, 27 September 1890, and *Pagan Papers*), were ‘fashionable’. In his ‘Introduction’ to *Seventy Years a Showman* by ‘Lord’ George Sanger, Grahame describes waiting, as a child, for the first travelling show of the year to arrive, heralding the spring: ‘when at last we caught sight of a certain small yellow caravan, with pretty Mrs S. and the latest baby sitting in front, the husband . . . walking at the horse’s head’ ((London: Dent, 1926), 9).

The fashion for caravanning had been inspired by the writer William Gordon Stables, who, in 1885, took his two-ton mahogany caravan, pulled by two horses (Corn Flower and Pease Blossom) and accompanied by his valet and a cockatoo, from his home in Twyford via Pangbourne to Inverness (where he got the train home). In *Leaves from the Log of a Gentleman Gipsy in Wayside Camp and Caravan* (Jarrod, n.d. [1891]) he describes his first inspiration: ‘a beautiful caravan . . . that went straight to my heart. It was a caravan of old-fashioned shape after all, painted bright yellow, the wheels picked out with vermilion, the gipsies have ever an eye for the brightest of colours’ (pp. 14–15). (Stables passed a duck-pond on his travels: ‘Ducks in the pond all head down, tails and yellow feet up’ (p. 104)).

On his fifth birthday, Alastair Grahame was given ‘a gipsy caravan with brushes and baskets which he has been selling ever since, at somewhat inflated prices’ (Green, 236).

nothing whatever has been forgotten: Toad’s tour of the caravan is similar to Gordon Stables’s account in his *The Cruise of the Land Yacht ‘Wanderer’, or, Thirteen Hundred Miles in my Caravan* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1886): ‘The other articles of furniture . . . consist of a piano-stool and a tiny camp-chair, music rack, footstool, dressing-case, a few artful cushions, pretty mirrors on the wall, with gilt baskets for coloured candles, a corner

- bracket with a clock, a guitar, a small harmonium, a violin, a navy sword, and a good revolver' (p. 91). The description in *Gentleman Gipsy* includes a commode and his valet's quarters (pp. 22–3).
- 22 *frightfully left out of it*: the horse in Milne's *Toad of Toad Hall* (1929) is called Alfred, and is a close cousin of Eeyore in the 'Winnie-the-Pooh' books. Not only does he say 'I do get so frightfully left out of it', and adds 'And the ups' to Toad's praise of 'the rolling downs', but says things like: 'That's right. Go inside and enjoy yourselves! Talk to each other, tell each other little stories, but don't ask *me* to join in the conversation' (Act 1).
- incredible speed*: the national speed limit for motorized vehicles had been increased to 20 mph in 1903.
- droning bee once more*: several publishers (including Methuen) were producing books featuring motor cars, such as *The Lightning Conductor—The Strange Adventures of a Motor Car* (1902) and *The Princess Passes—A Romance of a Motor* (1904) based on European motor tours, by C. N. and A. M. Williamson. See Maureen Duffy in *A Thousand Capricious Chances: A History of the Methuen List, 1889–1989* (London: Methuen 1989), 35.
- 23 *road-hogs*: in the holograph, Grahame wrote 'stockbrokers!' rather than 'road-hogs' (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. e. 248: 45).
- 24 *what a flowery track*: echoes of an idiomatic saying, and of Shakespeare: Ophelia says in *Hamlet* (1.3): 'Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine | Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads | And reck's not his own rede'; the Clown in *All's Well that Ends Well* (4.5) says that 'the many [will be] for the flowery way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire', and in *Macbeth* (2.3) the Porter speaks of 'professions that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire'.
- 25 *that swan, that sunbeam, that thunderbolt*: James Jayo notes that 'These are three aspects of Zeus . . . as a swan he seduced Leda . . . as a sunbeam he seduced Danaë . . . [and] his primary identifier in antiquity was the thunderbolt' (in *The Annotated Wind in the Willows*, ed. Annie Gauger (New York: Norton, 2009), 56).
- 26 *very expensive motor-car*: Alan Bennett notes that Guy Burgess 'in his final days at the Washington Embassy, acquired a 12-cylinder Lincoln convertible in which he had frequent mishaps. "He drove it," said Lord Greenhill, a fellow diplomat, "just like Mr Toad"' (Bennett, 20). John Goldthwaite (*The Natural History of Make-Believe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 321) suggests that 'the travels and mishaps of Toad, from which the saga grew, were likely prompted by the popular Golliwogg stories of Bertha and Florence Upton (1895–1909), and in particular by a bedtime session with *The Golliwogg's Auto-Go-Cart* [Longmans, Green 1901]'. It seems indisputable that this book suffuses Toad's adventures. The Golliwogg, having been arrested for dangerous driving, makes his escape from a window (on a rope made of the doll Sarah-Jane's cape), and

when his (electric) Auto-Go-Cart blows up, he is found in the river. Three characteristic verses:

9. 'We'll fly along with howling horn
And maddest echoes wake,
No obstacle need stay our pace
While I am at the brake.'

26. They drive them, tied with yards of rope,
Into a darksome cell;
For 'scorching' means a heavy fine,
Imprisonment as well.

66. He laughed about the accident,
And joked about the rain,
Till voting was unanimous
To take the trip again.

28 *gavotte*: an ornate dance, sometimes involving the exchange of flowers or kisses.

Purple loosestrife . . . *ready to begin*: in using these plants, from the contemporary poetical lexicon, Grahame was not altogether accurate in their sequence. *Purple loosestrife* blooms June–September, *willow-herb* June–August, *comfrey* May–September, *dog-rose* June, and *meadow-sweet* June–August.

Gillian Avery suggests that Grahame's list may have been influenced by Richard Jefferies in *The Life of the Fields* (1884) (*The Wind in the Willows*, ed. Gillian Avery (New York: Penguin, 2005), 194–5). In 'The Pageant of Summer', Jefferies mentions Hart's tongue fern, white meadow-sweet, stout willow-herbs, pink lychris flowers, yellow loosestrife and thick comfrey. In the essay 'Loafing' (*National Observer*, January 1891, and *Pagan Papers*) Grahame writes:

With one paddle out he will drift down the stream: just brushing the flowering rush and the meadow-sweet and taking in as peculiar gifts the varied sweets of even. The loosestrife is his, and the arrow-head: his the distant moan of the weir; his are the glories, amber and scarlet and silver, of the sunset-haunted surface.

Such a rich chapter it had been . . . the Mole had a good deal of spare time: this is an interpolation into the holograph (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. 248: 56). The original text reads:

. . . the past summer—and all its doings.

But the Mole was left a good deal to himself and one afternoon, when the Rat, in his armchair beside the fire, was alternately dozing and trying over rhymes that wouldn't fit, he formed the resolution to go out by himself & explore the Wild Wood and perhaps strike up an acquaintance with Mr Badger.

The paragraph from 'But the Mole' to 'with Mr Badger' has been hatched out. The next two pages are of slightly different quality paper, and the writing more cramped; page 57 begins with the published text, 'Such a rich chapter it had been' and the interpolation ends at the bottom of page 58 with 'when the animals found themselves around the fire'. An extra line has been added, in the cramped hand, at the top of page 59: 'the Mole had a good deal of spare time'. The published text then continues.

29 *screens of quickset*: hawthorn or hazel hedge.

from a hole: in chapter 13 of Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* the narrator describes Quarry Woods, also the model for the Wild Wood:

Marlow is one of the pleasantest river centres I know of . . . There is lovely country round about it too, if, after boating, you are fond of a walk, while the river itself is at its best here. Down to Cookham, past the Quarry Woods and the meadows, is a lovely reach! Dear old Quarry Woods! with your narrow, climbing paths, and little winding glades, how scented to this hour you seem with memories of sunny summer days! How haunted are your shadowy vistas with the ghosts of laughing faces! how from your whispering leaves there softly fall the voices of long ago!

It would seem that the Grahames were acquainted with the Jeromes. In Elspeth's notebook (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. 174: 15^v) she writes: 'Jerome K. Jerome once told me that he was so far more conscientious than his actual conscience that it was of no use his having one.' Nigel McMorris of the Kenneth Grahame Society has pointed out that Jerome K. Jerome wrote *Three Men in a Boat* while living at 104 Chelsea Gardens (a block of apartments on Chelsea Bridge Road, London); Grahame lived at 65 Chelsea Gardens from 1886 to 1894.

A possible literary echo is from the third of D. G. Rossetti's four 'Willowwood' Sonnets (*Fortnightly Review*, 1869), which echoes the atmosphere, if not the situation:

Oh ye, all ye that walk in Willowwood,
That walk with hollow faces burning white . . .
Alas! the bitter banks of Willowwood,
With tear-spurge wan, with blood-wort burning red . . .

32 *hatful of golden guineas*: idiomatic, as the guinea ceased to be coined in 1816.

36 *you dull-witted animal* . . . *If I only had your head, Ratty*: a parody of Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson; thirty-seven of Conan Doyle's fifty-six short stories, and three of the four 'novels' about the great detective, had appeared before 1908, and Holmes was still at the height of his fame.

37 *the Badger*: Green nominates Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch ('Q') (1863–1944) as a model for Badger (as well as Rat) (Green, 214). 'Q' dedicated his novel *The Mayor of Troy* (1906) 'To my friend Kenneth Grahame and the rest of

the crew of the “Richard and Emily” (a skiff that he lent Grahame). Green also suggests a self-portrait: ‘Slip-shod but well-equipped, indifferent to fashions but careful of comfort, Badger represents Grahame’s own conception of himself as the rural *ours philanthropique*’; and he sees ‘elements of [W. E.] Henley . . . and an odd resemblance to old Mr. Iden in Richard Jefferies’ *Amaryllis at the Fair* [1887]’ (p. 281). However, although they share a certain ascerbic authority, Amaryllis’s Grandfather Iden is a generally unsympathetic ‘aged man’ of over 90 who ‘muttered and mumbled’. Amaryllis’s father and his kitchen are more in the spirit of Badger and *his* kitchen.

Imitations of Grahame’s Badger have been popular, notably Alison Uttley’s ‘Brock the Badger’ (from 1939), and *Mr Badger to the Rescue* (A. J. Macgregor and W. Perring, 1949) in the iconic Ladybird books series. One of the rare picture-books to discuss death is Susan Varley’s *Badger’s Parting Gifts* (1984).

On 9 November 1930, Grahame wrote to a Miss Templeton: ‘I am sure you are right in preferring the more solid merits of Badger to the showy, if attractive qualities of Toad, though a previous generation may prefer him’ (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 527: 166).

flat candle-stick: a dish with a short stem to hold the candle, often with a built-in extinguisher—a design that goes back at least to Roman times. In Wilkie Collins’s story ‘Blow Up with the Brig’ (*All the Year Round*, Christmas 1859) the narrator is haunted by ‘a bedroom candlestick and candle, or a flat candlestick and candle—put it which way you like’.

- 38 *large fire-lit kitchen*: a (distant) successor of Badger’s house may be found in T. H. White’s *The Sword in the Stone* (1938), chapter 21: the boy King Arthur (‘Wart’) is turned into a badger as part of his education and visits an ‘enchanted’ sett, where a badger shows him around: ‘I don’t use it all. It is a rambling old place, much too big for a single man. I suppose some parts of it may be a thousand years old.’ Arthur revisits the sett in *The Book of Merlyn* (1977), chapter 3: ‘There was the well-remembered room. There were portraits of long-dead badgers, famous for scholarship or godliness: there were the glow-worms and the mahogany fans and the tilting board for circulating the decanters. There were the moth-eaten gowns and the chairs of stamped leather.’

fitly feast after victory: Carpenter detects an echo of Anglo-Saxon verse, and the mead-hall, and that ‘to Grahame’s generation it must also have had William Morris-like hints of an earlier, pre-industrial, and therefore ideal society where distinctions of class seemed unimportant when food was being dealt out, and men of all ranks sat together in the lord’s hall or by the yeoman farmer’s hearthside’ (Humphrey Carpenter, *Secret Gardens* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1985), 162). The trestle table, red tiles, and oaken settles all feature in the community house in the story ‘Dies Iræ’, in *Dream Days*.

Harvest Home: the traditional supper: see, for example, Hardy’s *Under the Greenwood Tree*, chapter 5. The expression was familiar from the hymn

by Henry Alford (1810–71): ‘Come ye thankful people come, | Raise the song of harvest-home’ (1844), and from Robert Herrick’s ‘The Hock-Cart, or Harvest Home’ (the hock cart was the last load of the harvest): ‘Crown’d with the ears of corn, now come | And to the pipe sing Harvest Home.’

- 45 *It’s astonishing*: Badger’s underground home may have been suggested to Grahame by the 5th Duke of Portland’s extensive underground tunnels and rooms at Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire. These were brought to public notice through the Druce case (1897–1907), when false claims were made on the estate. It seems more probable that it is the product of Grahame’s experience of Italian antiquities and the topography of Quarry Woods. Goldthwaite (*The Natural History of Make-Believe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 321) detects an image from H. G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* (1895).

freshets: floods caused by heavy rains or melted snow (*SOED*).

- 48 *Dulce Domum*: Latin ‘sweet home’. Also a school end-of-term song said to have originated at Winchester College, and a popular song by Robert S. Ambrose (1876).

This story was reissued separately as *Sweet Home from Kenneth Grahame’s The Wind in the Willows* (Methuen, 1940). When planning an edition of separate stories, illustrated by photographs of models by Paul Henning, Curtis Brown wrote to Elspeth Grahame (31 March 1944): ‘The first little volume, *DULCE DOMEN* [*sic*] . . . will be translated into *SWEET HOUSE* for the benefit of un-Latined public’ (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 379: 265).

the plough: ploughed land.

well-metalled road: a metalled road is one with a well-compacted surface, in Grahame’s day, of layers of stone and aggregates. Tarmacadam surfaces did not become common until the 1920s and 1930s.

casements: windows hinging outwards, often separated by a vertical mullion (and poetic language for windows).

- 54 *Garibaldi, and the infant Samuel* . . . *other heroes of modern Italy*: this joke comments on the lower-middle-class Victorian fashion for plaster statues; see, for example, the Sherlock Holmes story ‘The Six Napoleons’ (*Strand Magazine*, May 1904).

containing goldfish: in reply to a query from Professor G. T. Hill about who fed the goldfish in Mole’s absence, Grahame wrote (24 September 1919):

Mole, though unmarried and evidently in rather poor circumstances, as incomes go nowadays, could probably have afforded to get some outside assistance say twice a week or so—indeed, living as he did, it would be almost a necessity. He probably then had a char-mouse in for a few hours and her dinner on certain days, and the animal would have cleaned up his whitewashing mess in a perfunctory sort of way; then finding that her weekly pittance was no longer forthcoming, quite naturally and properly would have taken her services elsewhere,

though from kindness of heart she might have continued to give an occasional eye to the goldfish. (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 281, 45^r; Chalmers, 62)

55 *captain's biscuits*: a form of ship's biscuits (which are dried to prevent the growth of mould) made with finer flour (see, for example, Mrs Isabella Beeton, *The Book of Household Management* (1861), paras. 1714–15).

56 *horn lantern*: a lantern with panes of horn, rather than of glass.

red worsted comforters: long woollen scarves.

to lamp-lit windows at Yule-time: this sequence bears several resemblances to the carol-singing of the Melstock choir in Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872). With its horn lanterns, the choir walks the parish in the snow:

They formed round in a semi-circle, the boys opening the lanterns to get a clearer light, and directing their rays on the books.

Then passed forth into the quiet night an ancient and time-worn hymn, embodying a quaint Christianity in words orally transmitted from father to son through several generations down to the present characters, who sang them out right earnestly. (Chapter 4: 'Going the Rounds')

The Grahames were acquaintances of the Hardys.

There is an unsuccessful carol-singing episode in 'Bertie's Escapade' (*First Whispers*, 43).

CAROL: this was published by Novello, with music by James Angel, in 1946. The carol was recorded in 2007 by the *Financial Times* choir as 'Carol of the Field Mice', with music by Brian Holmes.

57 *benison*: blessing.

litter: straw, rushes or the like, serving as bedding (*SOED*).

see you get Buggins's: a fictional brand-name with comic overtones. 'Juggins' was contemporary slang for someone foolish.

58 *Old Burton*: ale or beer brewed at Burton-upon-Trent, and typically aged for a year. In *Lavengro* (1851), chapter 68, George Borrow writes: 'Oh, genial and gladdening is the power of good ale, the true and proper drink of Englishmen. He is not deserving of the name of Englishman who speaketh against ale, that is good ale.'

mull some ale: recipes for mulled ale commonly include sugar, cloves, nutmeg, and sometimes brandy or rum. In *The Golden Age* ('What they Talked About') the Mummers were given mulled port.

Barbary corsair: in real life, pirates based in Algiers who were a powerful force from the eleventh to the nineteenth century.

Royal Humane Society's regulations: The Royal Humane Society, originally called 'The Society for the Recovery of Persons Apparently Drowned', was founded in 1774.

- 62 *struggling and protesting*: Alan Bennett, in his stage adaptation, has Toad protest: 'You can't frogmarch me, I'm a Toad' (Bennett, 30).
- 66 *being the hero of a Sunday-school prize*: the Sunday school movement was founded by Robert Raikes in the 1780s and had a major influence on publishing for children. Sunday school prize books commonly featured pious 'ministering children', and lachrymose deathbeds.
- 67 *lightly to the ground*: Eleanor Graham notes that during Grahame's childhood as he was 'frequently locked in his room as a punishment, he had learned to escape by the window and to time his return comfortably before the hour of release' (Eleanor Graham, *Kenneth Grahame* (London: The Bodley Head, 1963), 32–3).
- 68 *'The Red Lion'*: 'The Red Lion' is a hotel by the bridge in Henley-on-Thames, and an advertisement from 1873 offers a 'large coffee room and private sitting rooms over-looking the river'. In his *Life of Johnson* Boswell notes that he and Johnson were 'lying this night at the inn at Henley' when Johnson, echoing Shenstone, remarked 'No, sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn' (1776). 'The Red Lion' is the most popular British inn name, and there are others at Blewbery, Lambourne (which had a large sign overhanging the street), and Cricklade, all on or near the Thames.

This episode is a development of the first extant letter from Grahame to his son (written from Green Bank Hotel, Falmouth, 10 May 1907):

And [Toad] got out of the window early one morning, & went off to a town called Buggleton & went to the Red Lion Hotel & there he found a party that had just motored down from London, & while they were having breakfast he went into the stable-yard & found their motor-car & went off in it without even saying Poop-poop! And now he has vanished & every one is looking for him, including the police. I fear he is a bad low animal. (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 281)

- 69 *to hold on to the leg of the table*: a humorous nod to Homer, whose Odysseus has to be bound to his ship's mast so as not to be seduced by the song of the Sirens (*The Odyssey*, book 12).
- had hold of the handle*: the cranked starting handle. The first self-starters were not fitted to cars until 1912 (Cadillac).
- everlasting night*: M. G. Lay, in *Ways of the World, a History of the World's Roads and the Vehicles that Used Them* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 179), cites this passage as epitomizing the 'arrogant, threatening attitude of many [early] motorists'.
- 70 *To my mind . . . very seriously*: a parody of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury* (1875).
- dragged him from the Court House*: Alan Bennett's stage direction for his version of this incident reads: 'Toad is led away . . . but as he is hauled past

Badger this gentleman solemnly raises his hat—a literary reference which is likely to pass unnoticed. In the downfall and trial of Toad, Kenneth Grahame was probably thinking of Wilde's trial. When Wilde was led away after being sentenced his friend Robert Ross was seen to raise his hat' (Bennett, 40).

- 71 *Then the brutal minions . . . murrain on both of them!*: 'murrain' means 'plague'. Much of this scene may have been inspired by Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Yeoman of the Guard* (1888), a fact that did not escape A. A. Milne. He named his gaoler's daughter, in *Toad of Toad Hall*, Phoebe—in the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, Phoebe Meryll is the daughter of one of the senior Yeomen, and helps Colonel Fairfax to escape. She has the lines: 'Are all the birds caged? . . . All the locks, chains, bolts, and bars in good order? . . . The racks, pincers and thumbscrews all ready for work?' (Act 1).

Grahame's enthusiastic parody targets the more florid extremes of writers from Sir Walter Scott, through Dickens and Harrison Ainsworth, combining the Gothic with low-life Victorian society and its residual antithesis, 'Merrie England'. Its particular target would seem to be the 'penny dreadfuls' that sold in huge numbers in the second half of the century. A typical example is G. W. M. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London* (1844–6) which sold a reputed 40,000 copies a week, and featuring passages such as this, from volume I, chapter xxvi: 'NEWGATE! What an ominous sound has that word! . . . the mind instantaneously becomes filled with visions of vice in all its most hideous forms . . . wards and court-yards filled with a population peculiar to themselves,—dark, gloomy passages where the gas burns all day long . . . condemned cells,—the chapels in which funeral sermons are preached to men yet alive to hear them . . . the clanking of chains, the banging of huge doors'.

Merry England: Merrie England by Robert Blatchford ('Clarion' Office, 1895) was a socialist manifesto attacking the factory system, and comparing the pollution of Lancashire and other industrial areas with the 'pure air, bright skies, clear rivers, clean streets, and beautiful fields . . . cattle and streams, and birds and flowers' of Surrey, Suffolk, and Hampshire; none of which 'can exist side by side with the factory system' (chapter 3, p. 21).

- 72 *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*: in the contents page of the typescript, this chapter was called 'The Wind in the Reeds'. It was the title of the 1967 debut album of UK 'psychedelic' rock band, Pink Floyd, largely written by Syd Barrett.

Willow-Wren: small migratory bird now more commonly known as the willow warbler (*phylloscopus trochilus*). Gilbert White in Letter XIX of his *Natural History of Selbourne* (1789) distinguished three species (*motacillae trichili*). The smallest willow-wren was the first bird to appear each year in White's neighbourhood.

selvedge: bordering vegetation.

Portly: named after one of Graham Robertson's Bob Tail sheepdogs. In his autobiography, *Time Was*, Robertson writes: "I hope you don't mind," said Kenneth Grahame in his courteous, deliberate way as he showed me the MSS. "You see, I *must* call him Portly because—well, because it is his name. What else am I to call him?" (W. Graham Robertson, *Time Was* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1931), 330).

In 1931, Miss M. L. Story sent Grahame a poem on Pan and Portly: he replied (16 October 1931): 'Thank you very much for letting me have a copy of your extremely beautiful and touching verses on the subject of poor little Portly. The Portlys (or should it be Portlies?) of the underworld cannot have too many friends' (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 527: 185, and see Chalmers, 97–8).

- 73 *before they built the bridge*: Grahame's topography seems most likely to be imaginary, but the new bridge may have been suggested by the bridge built between Whitchurch-on-Thames and Pangbourne in 1902. Elspeth Grahame wrote to Curtis Brown about this bridge, then a toll-bridge, that 'Kenneth used to laugh and say that our sole source of income consisted in *not* going over Whitchurch Bridge, which we seldom did, though we constantly stood there' (Curtis Brown, *Contacts* (London: Cassell, 1935), 67). Other candidates are bridges at Restormal, and at Lanhydrock, on the River Fowey. E. H. Shepard's illustration to the chapter resembles Sonning bridge.

- 75 *osiers*: willows.

take the backwater: in 'The Rural Pan' (*National Observer*, 25 April 1891, and *Pagan Papers*) Grahame described the haunts of Pan: 'In the hushed recesses of Hurley backwater [just upstream from Marlow, and across the river from Harleyford Manor] where the canoe may be paddled almost under the tumbling comb of the weir, he is to be looked for; there the god pipes with freest abandonment'. In an interesting gathering of associations with *The Wind in the Willows* he continues, 'or prone by the secluded stream of the sinuous Mole [a river which flows into the Thames opposite Hampton Court] abounding in friendly greetings for his foster-brothers the dab-chick and the water-rat'. Jerome K. Jerome in chapter 13 of *Three Men in a Boat* felt that 'by Hurley Weir . . . I have often thought that I could stay a month without having sufficient time to drink in all the beauty of the scene'. Mapledurham Weir is another candidate for this backwater.

possessed him utterly: Richard Gillin notes, among many other echoes of Romantic verse, an echo from Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey':

. . . that serene and blessed mood
 In which affections gently lead us on
 Until the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul.

While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

(lines 42–50)

(‘Romantic Echoes in the Willows’, *Children’s Literature*, 16 (1988), 172).

76 *called and chosen*: there is a similar rhapsody on flowers, including the purple loose-strife in Gordon Stables’s *The Cruise of the Land Yacht ‘Wanderer’, or, Thirteen Hundred Miles in my Caravan* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1886), 261–3.

77 *on the sword*: Peter Green asserts that F. J. Furnivall, ‘this wild man of letters[,] with his white beard was an inspiration for Grahame’s “Pan” in *The Wind in the Willows*’ (*Beyond the Wild Wood: The World of Kenneth Grahame* (Exeter: Webb and Bower, 1982), 54).

and did worship: this seems to have been a particularly popular section of the book in the early twentieth century. Alfred Deakin (Australian prime minister 1903–4, 1905–8, 1909–10) wrote to Grahame on 28 January 1909: ‘I can no longer deny myself the pleasure of congratulating you upon an even higher and more original achievement—a prose poem perfect within its scope in style and sentiment, rising to its climax in the vision of Pan—a piece of imaginative insight to which it would be hard to find a parallel anywhere. Certainly one would only look for it among the rarest flowers of literature in that vein’ (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 527: 78).

80 *it dies away*: cf. *The Tempest*, 1. 2, when Ferdinand says:

Where should this music be? i’ the air or the earth?
It sounds no more: and sure, it waits upon
Some god o’ the island . . .
This music crept by me upon the waters . . .
. . . thence I have follow’d it,
Or it hath drawn me rather. But ’tis gone.
No, it begins again.

81 *Toad’s Adventures*: in the holograph and typescript title pages, this chapter was called ‘Toad’s Terrible Adventures’.

dark despair: possibly a reference to Oscar Wilde.

83 *linen-presses*: cupboards with shelves and drawers beneath used for storing domestic linen.

84 *When the girl returned . . . satisfactory to both parties*: the second letter to Alastair Grahame, written from the Green Bank Hotel, Falmouth (23 May 1907), reads:

Then the gaoler’s daughter went & fetched a cup of hot tea & some very hot buttered toast, cut thick, very brown on both sides, with the butter running through the holes in great golden drops like honey. When the toad smelt the buttered toast he sat up and dried his

eyes for he was exceedingly fond of buttered toast; and the gaoler's daughter comforted him & he drank his tea & had another plate of toast. Then they discussed plans for his escape from the dungeon.

There may be a parallel between the gaoler's daughter and Athene in *The Odyssey*. Toad's disguise is reminiscent of Beatrix Potter's Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, and his adventures in general may derive from Falstaff's adventures in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

85 *rusty*: shabby, worn, or faded (*SOED*).

over which she had no control: A. A. Milne developed this scene in Act III, Scene 2 of *Toad of Toad Hall*:

PHOEBE. My aunt thinks she ought to be gagged and bound, so as to look as if she had been overcome. You'd like it too. You wanted to leave the prison in style.

TOAD (*beamingly*). An excellent idea! So much more in keeping with my character.

AUNT (*enjoying it*). Got a nankerchief?

TOAD (*producing one*). Yes.

AUNT Then you gags me first. (*In a hoarse whisper*) Help! Help! Help! Help! Help!

TOAD (*carried away by the realism of this*). Silence, woman, or else I gag thee!

AUNT (*undeterred*) Help! Help! Help!

TOAD (*advancing with gag*). Thou has brought it on thyself . . . A murrain on thy cackling tongue!

86 *that he was free!*: the letter to Alastair Grahame of 23 May 1907 reads:

So when the washerwoman came with the linen, they dressed toad up in her clothes & put a bonnet on his head, and he marched, past the gaolers, as bold as you please. As he was passing one of them, the man said "Hullo mother washerwoman why didn't you send home my Sunday shirt last week, you lazy old pig?" & he took his stick & beat her full sore. And the toad was mad with rage, because he wanted to give him a punch in the eye, but he controlled himself & ran on through the door, which banged behind him & he was Free.

87 *pocket-book*: a notebook, or a wallet for papers, banknotes, etc.

88 *all flying past him*: perhaps an echo of Robert Louis Stevenson's 'From a Railway Carriage' (*A Child's Garden of Verses*, 1885).

Faster than fairies, faster than witches,
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches . . .
All of the sights of the hill and the plain
Fly as thick as driving rain . . .
Here is a mill, and there is a river:
Each a glimpse and gone forever.

89 *pot-hats*: a variety of the Top Hat ('chimney-pot' hat), rather out of fashion by 1908.

90 *They piled on more coals*: Grahame wrote, in a letter to Prof. G. T. Hill of London University (24 September 1919), of the need for 'character economy'. 'The presence of certain characters may be indicated in or required by the story, but if the author has no immediate use for them, he simply ignores their existence . . . the wretched [author], ignorant as he is, must have known perfectly well that the locomotive on which Toad escaped required the services of a stoker as well as an engine-driver, but he didn't happen to *want* a stoker, so he simply ignored him' (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 281: 45^r, and Chalmers, 62–3).

One of the things that the 'palefaced quilldriver' of 'The Eternal Whither' (*National Observer*, 9 July 1892, and *Pagan Papers*) is denied is 'the great delight of driving a locomotive . . . whirled along in a glorious nimbus of smoke-pant, spark-shower and hoarse warning roar'.

running light: railway term for an engine travelling with no carriages or trucks.

92 *Wayfarers All*: the subtitle of E. V. Lucas's *The Open Road* was 'A Little Book for Wayfarers'. Edmund R. Purves, the son of Kenneth Grahame's American friend Austin Purves, thought that this episode was inspired by a walk taken by Grahame and Austin Purves, or possibly Edward Atkinson ('Atky'), 'towards the West on the Fowey side, past Ready Money Cove, to St. Catherine's Castle and the hills and sea-coast beyond that' (Green, 268).

en pension: living and taking all meals at a hotel; also known as 'full board' and 'American plan'.

93 *realm of wheat . . . stalks that carried their own golden sky away over his head*: the holograph reads: 'sea of wheat . . . stalks that led up to their own golden sky they carried, away over his head'.

beechnut: the nuts of the beech tree.

94 *talked together earnestly and low*: this sequence is reminiscent of Richard Jefferies's *Wood Magic* (1881) in which the birds and animals remain essentially birds and animals, only with human speech, and which has several nature-mystic passages reminiscent of Grahame's early style. In 'Walks in the Wheatfields' in *Field and Hedgerow* (1889) Jefferies writes: 'The beautiful swallows, be tender to them, for they symbol [*sic*] all that is best in nature and all that is best in our hearts.'

96 *purple islands of wine and spice*: Harold, in the story 'The Argonauts' in *The Golden Age*, is sitting in an empty pig-trough: "'I'm Jason,'" he replied defiantly; "and this is the Argo. The other fellows are here too, only you can't see them . . ." And once more he plied the wine-dark sea.' The yearning for escape in this passage is reflected in the essay 'Aboard the Galley' (*National Observer*, 3 September 1892, and *Pagan Papers*), in which Grahame contrasts the seafarers with the stay-at-homes: 'Whence this gallant little company, running before the breeze, stark, happy, and extinct,

all bound for the Isles of Light! 'Twas a sight to shame us sitters at home, who believe in those islands, most of us, even as they, yet are content to trundle City-wards, or to Margate, as long as the sorry breath is in us; and breathless at last, to Bow or Kensal Green; without one effort, dead or alive, to reach the far-shining Hesperides.'

and a very dusty one: the Sea Rat bears some resemblance to the artist encountered in the story 'The Roman Road' (*The Yellow Book* (July 1894) and *The Golden Age*): 'seated at work by the roadside, at a point whence the cool large spaces of the downs, juniper-studded, swept grandly west-wards'. This scene may also be a reference to Kenneth Grahame's aborted holiday with 'Atky' in 1904 (see Alison Prince, *Kenneth Grahame: An Innocent in the Wild Wood* (London: Allison and Busby, 1994), 201–4).

- 98 *Sigurd, King of Norway*: the Sea Rat may be quoting from the *Heimskringla*, the chronicles of the Kings of Norway, an English edition of which was published in London by the Norroendo Society in 1907. The king referred to is Sigurd I Magnusson (1090–1130), known as Sigurd the Crusader—not to be confused with the Sigurd of *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs*, the hero of a much older saga translated by William Morris in 1876 (which has no reference to Constantinople). This issue is explored in Giles E. M. Gasper, 'Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* and William Morris's Old Norse Translations', *Notes and Queries*, 248 [NS 50], 3 (September 2003), 323–4. Gasper quotes Volume 3 of Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon's 'Saga Library', 'Saga of Sigurd the Jerusalem-Farer, Egstein, and Olaf': 'but a mickle many of North-men abode behind [in Constantinople], and went into war-wage there' (p. 263).

riding-lights: lights on an anchored ship.

- 99 *storm-cone*: a canvas cone hoisted by shore stations as a gale warning.
Venice: Grahame first visited Venice around 1890 and gave an account of meeting a 'sane creature' who had escaped there from his job in London in 'Long Odds' (*The Yellow Book*, July 1895).
- 100 *Allassio*: Grahame visited the town in 1895, and 'at least twice during the next three years' (Green, 163–4).
- 101 *roadsteads*: places where 'ships may conveniently and safely lie at anchor near the shore' (*SOED*).
compelled his gaze: the Sea Rat resembles Coleridge's Ancient Mariner and the Water Rat's reaction, that of the Wedding Guest.
caique: Mediterranean skiff or light fishing-boat.
- 102 *leech*: the perpendicular or sloping side of a sail (*SOED*).
hamser: a thick rope or cable for mooring (or towing) vessels.
little grey sea town I know so well: in a letter to Elspeth, before they were married, Grahame describes his arrival at Fowey: 'As the river mouth came in view larst night with the boats & the little grey town I felt summow 's if I was coming ome,—from boarding-school at Torquay' (Bodleian MS

Eng. misc. e. 480: 35^v). In 1931, he received a letter from Ann Channer of Instow, North Devon, who had said of *The Wind in the Willows* that it 'is the rippingest animal book that I have ever read'. She went on, 'I know Fowey fairly well . . . I think it is a very picturesque little town and I do not think it will ever change much.' To which he replied (from the Hotel Augusta, Cannes, 22 February): 'I hope you recognised the "Fowey" bit' (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 527: 171, 172).

sparkling blue water: an alleyway at 18–22 North Street, Fowey, leads down to the harbour, where valerian was reputed to have grown in the stonework.

- 103 *and put them in a satchel*: there is a parallel with Huck Finn's departure from the cabin in chapter 7 of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1855) (Christopher Clausen, 'Home and Away in Children's Fiction', *Children's Literature*, 10 (1982), 145–6). Elspeth Grahame had, as a girl, briefly entertained Twain at her parents' house in Edinburgh (Green, 202).
- 107 *gunwale*: the strip of wood around the top edge of the hull of a boat.
one brawny arm: the barge-woman could well be a parody of W. E. Henley's 'The Pretty Washermaiden' which appeared in E. V. Lucas's anthology *The Open Road* (1899): 'Her round arms white with lather | Her elbows fresh and red.'
- 108 *clear-starching*: starching with a thin starch mixture, used for lace and delicate items such as lingerie. Compare Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Mrs Tiggly-Winkle* (1905) in which Mrs Tiggly-Winkle declares 'oh, yes if you please'm, I'm an excellent clear-starcher!' (p. 25).
- 110 *till the tears ran down her cheeks*: in the original letter to Alastair (from the Fowey Hotel, 7 June 1907) the Barge-woman was a Bargee:

Presently the man came to see how he was getting on, & burst out laughing at him, & said 'Call yourself a washerwoman? That's not the way to wash a shirt, you very silly old woman!' Then the toad lost his temper, & quite forgot himself, & said 'Don't you dare speak to your betters like that! I'm no more an old woman than you are yourself, you common, low, vulgar bargee!' Then the bargee looked closely at him, & cried out 'Why, no, I can see you're not really a washerwoman at all! You're nothing but an old toad!' Then he grabbed the toad by one hind-leg & one fore-leg, & swung him round & sent him flying through the air.

- 111 *wide common*: in 'A Bohemian in Exile' (*St James Gazette*, 27 September 1890, and *Pagan Papers*), Grahame wrote: 'The old road-life still lingered on in places, it seemed, once one got well away from the railway . . . the England of heath and common and windy sheep-down, of by-lanes and village-greens—the England of Parson Adams and Lavengro'. In 'The Romance of the Road' (*National Observer*, 14 February 1891, and *Pagan Papers*), he noted, 'Surely you seem to cover vaster spaces with Lavengro, footing it with gypsies or driving his tinker's cart across lonely

commons, than with many a globe-trotter or steam-yachtsman with diary or log?’

gipsy caravan: gipsies (or gypsies) were part of Grahame family lore. Alastair, aged ‘about 6½’, wrote a play called ‘Beauty Born’, which featured gipsies among the minor characters (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. c. 381: 15–16). This scene may also be an affectionate parody of the horse-dealing between the ‘gyptian’ Mr Petulengro and the narrator in chapter 18 of George Borrow’s *The Romany Rye* (1857): “‘He’s to be sold for fifty pounds . . . and is worth four times that sum.’” The Gypsy Lore Society was founded in 1888.

112 *blood horse*: a thoroughbred.

Hackney: a ‘general purpose’ horse for riding and driving.

113 *the most beautiful stew in the world*: several candidates for the derivation of this stew have been put forward, including Jerome K. Jerome’s parodic stew in *Three Men in a Boat* (chapter 14):

George said it was absurd to have only four potatoes in an Irish stew . . . we also put in a cabbage and about half a peck of peas . . . we overhauled both the hampers . . . there were half a pork pie and a bit of cold boiled bacon . . . Then George found half a tin of potted salmon . . . It was a great success, that Irish stew. I don’t think I ever enjoyed a meal more . . . here was a dish with a new flavour, with a taste like nothing else on earth . . . and as for the gravy, it was a poem—a little too rich, perhaps, for a weak stomach, but nutritious.

Gillian Avery (*The Wind in the Willows* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 196) thinks that the stew derives from ‘Just before Winter’ in Richard Jefferies’s final collection of essays *Field and Hedgerow* (1889):

Lines of bluish smoke ascend from among the bracken of the wild open ground, where a tribe of gipsies have pitched their camp . . . [The] women are cooking the gipsy’s *bouillon*, that savoury stew of all things good: vegetables, meat, and scraps, and savouries, collected as it were in the stock-pot from twenty miles around. Hodge, the stay-at-home, sturdy carter, eats bread and cheese and poor bacon sometimes; he looks with true British scorn on all scraps and soups, and stock-pots and bouillons—not for him, not he . . . The gipsy is a cook.

115 *Kitchener*: Herbert Horatio, Viscount (later Earl) Kitchener (1850–1916), one of Britain’s most famous soldiers, notable for campaigns in the Sudan and in the second Boer war; at the beginning of the twentieth century he was commander-in-chief of the Indian Army.

There was a great deal more . . . Red Lion Hotel: the original letter to Alastair (from 16 Durham Villas, Campden Hill, W., 17 July 1907) reads:

This was the sort of stuff that he sang, the conceited animal. But his pride was soon to have a fall. Let it be a lesson to us, not to be so puffed up & conceited as the proud Toad.

Presently he came to the high-road which ran past the common: and as he glanced up it, he saw, very far away, a dark speck, which gradually grew larger & larger & larger; & then he heard a faint humming noise, which gradually grew louder & louder & louder: & then he heard a very well known sound, & that was

Poop! poop!

'Ho ho!' said the Toad, 'this is life, this is what I like! I will stop them & ask them to give me a lift, & so I will drive up to Toad Hall in triumph on a motor-car! And perhaps I shall be able to—borrow that motor-car.' He did not say 'steal', but I fear the wicked animal thought it. He stepped out into the road to hail the car, when suddenly his face turned very pale, his knees trembled & shook, & he had a bad pain in his tummy. Why was this? Because he had suddenly recognised the car as the very one he had stolen out of the yard of the Red Lion Hotel!

- 120 *'Like Summer Tempests came his Tears'*: a misquotation of 'Like summer tempest came her tears' from 'Home they brought her warrior dead' in Tennyson's *The Princess* (1847).

Home they brought her warrior dead,
She nor swooned, nor uttered cry;
...
Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee—
Like summer tempest came her tears—
'Sweet my child, I live for thee.'

- 128 *go and enlist for a soldier*: 'I'll Go and Enlist for a Soldier' (or Sailor) is one of the English folk tunes collected by Cecil Sharp, and variously appears as a reel or a Morris dance.

- 134 *The Return of Ulysses*: Peter Green suggests that Grahame's habit of parodying Homer is found in Toad's adventures which 'bear a certain ludicrous resemblance to Ulysses' exploits in the *Odyssey*; and the resemblance becomes detailed and explicit in the last chapter' (Green, 260). While Ulysses (like Toad) returns home in rags and clears the house of impostors, the resemblances are superficial.

proceeded to dress them up: a parody of the Homeric arming ceremony (Green, 260).

cutting-out expedition: there is another 'cutting-out expedition' in the story 'The Argonauts' in *The Golden Age*.

- 142 *one more evening*: the final letter to Alastair (from 16 Durham Villas, Kensington, Sept. 1907) reads 'merely leave to "blow" for yet one more evening'.

- 144 *the greatest satisfaction*: the letters end here.

an altered Toad: on 6 December 1908, the Sharpe family wrote to Grahame: 'we do not in the least believe in the final reformation of Mr. Toad. We are

anxiously awaiting the expected appearance of the sequel, to be entitled "The Back Sliding of Mr. Toad" which we hope will contain his further adventures in motor-boats, motor-bicycles and aeroplanes.' Grahame replied (from Mayfield, Cookham Dean, 13 December): 'Of course Toad never really reformed; he was by nature incapable of it. But the subject is a painful one to pursue' (Bodleian MS Eng. misc. d. 527, 72-4).

- 145 *hush them and not fret them*: perhaps an echo of a Northumbrian lullaby: 'Hush ye, hush ye, do not fret ye | The Black Douglas shall not get ye.'