

## Seven

### La Dispute

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 throats and eyes,  
And splashes of whitewash all over his black fur.

Spring was moving in the air above  
And in the earth below and around him,  
Penetrating even his small 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  
And said, "Bother!"  
Something up above was calling him.

So he scraped and scratched and scrabbled and scrooged  
and then scrooged again and scrabbled and scratched and scraped,  
Working busily with his little paws and muttering to himself,  
"Up we go! Up we go!"  
Until 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.  
And jumping off all his four legs at once  
In the joy of living and the delight of spring,  
He pursued his way across the meadow  
Till he reached the hedge on the further side.

Hither and thither through the meadows he rambled busily,  
Finding everywhere birds building, flowers budding, leaves thrusting  
everything happy, and progressive, and occupied.  
And instead of having an uneasy conscience pricking him,  
He somehow could only feel how jolly it was to be  
The only idle dog among all these busy citizens.

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 this 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  
Flints 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 on trots,  
when very small, by the side of a man  
who holds one spell-bound by exciting stories;  
And when tired at last, he sat on the bank,  
While the river 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.

The mole waggled his toes from sheer happiness,  
Spread his chest with a sigh of full contentment,  
And leaned back blissfully.  
"What a day I'm having," he said.