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The Wind in the Willows

8

by Kenneth Grahame

10

Chapter 1

13

THE RIVER BANK

26 The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his
39 little home. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps
56 and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash; till he had dust in his throat
70 and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching
85 back and weary arms. Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth
98 below and around him, penetrating even his dark and lowly little house with
112 its spirit of divine discontent and longing. It was small wonder, then, that he
125 suddenly flung down his brush on the floor, said “Bother!” and “O blow!”
138 and also “Hang spring-cleaning!” and bolted out of the house without even
151 waiting to put on his coat. Something up above was calling him imperiously,
166 and he made for the steep little tunnel which answered in his case to the
177 gravelled carriage-drive owned by animals whose residences are nearer to
191 the sun and air. So he scraped and scratched and scabbled and scrooged and
402 then he scrooged again and scabbled and scratched and scraped, working
417 busily with his little paws and muttering to himself, “Up we go! Up we go!”

432 till at last, pop! his snout came out into the sunlight, and he found himself
441 rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow.

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

543 “Hold up!” said an elderly rabbit at the gap. “Sixpence for the privilege of
457 passing by the private road!” He was bowled over in an instant by the
469 impatient and contemptuous Mole, who trotted along the side of the hedge
482 chaffing the other rabbits as they peeped hurriedly from their holes to see
493 what the row was about. “Onion-sauce! Onion-sauce!” he remarked
505 jeeringly, and was gone before they could think of a thoroughly satisfactory
518 reply. Then they all started grumbling at each other. “How *stupid* you are!
530 Why didn’t you tell him——” “Well, why didn’t *you* say——” “You might
545 have reminded him——” and so on, in the usual way; but, of course, it was
554 then much too late, as is always the case.

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

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

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

962 A brown little face, with whiskers.