



The Tale of Grandfather Mole

By Arthur Scott Bailey (1877-1949)

Arthur Scott Bailey (1877 – 1949) was the author of more than forty children’s books.

Bailey’s writing has been described thusly by the Newark Evening News: “Mr. Bailey centered all his plots in the animal, bird and insect worlds, weaving natural history into the stories in a way that won educator’s approval without arousing the suspicions of his young readers. He made it a habit to never ‘write down’ to children and frequently used words beyond the average juvenile vocabulary, believing that youngsters respond to the stimulus of the unfamiliar.” (Summary by Wikipedia)

Read by Lucy Burgoyne. Total Running Time: 02:02:08.

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THE TALE OF GRANDFATHER MOLE

**BY
ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY**

Sleepy-Time Tales
(Trademark Registered)

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ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY

Author of
Tuck-Me-in Tales
(Trademark Registered)

THE TALE OF CUFFY BEAR
THE TALE OF FRISKY SQUIRREL
THE TALE OF TOMMY FOX
THE TALE OF FATTY COON
THE TALE OF BILLY WOODCHUCK
THE TALE OF JIMMY RABBIT
THE TALE OF PETER MINK
THE TALE OF SANDY CHIPMUNK
THE TALE OF BROWNIE BEAVER
THE TALE OF PADDY MUSKRAT
THE TALE OF FERDINAND FROG
THE TALE OF DICKIE DEER MOUSE
THE TALE OF TIMOTHY TURTLE
THE TALE OF MAJOR MONKEY
THE TALE OF BENNY BADGER

[Illustration: Grandfather Mole Made a Rush for Mr. Meadow Mouse.
_Frontispiece

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Illustrated by Harry L. Smith

*New York
Grosset & Dunlap
Publishers
Made in the United States of America
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THE TALE OF GRANDFATHER MOLE

I

A QUEER OLD PERSON

THERE was a queer old person that lived in Farmer Green's garden. Nobody knew exactly how long he had made his home there because his neighbors seldom saw him. He might have been in the garden a whole summer before anybody set eyes on him.

Those that were acquainted with him called him Grandfather Mole. And the reason why his friends didn't meet him oftener was because he spent most of his time underground. Grandfather Mole's house was in a mound at one end of the garden. He had made the house himself, for he was a great digger. And Mr. Meadow Mouse often remarked that it had more halls than any other dwelling he had ever seen. He had visited it when Grandfather Mole was away from home, so he knew what it was like.

Some of those halls that Mr. Meadow Mouse mentioned ran right out beneath the surface of the garden. Grandfather Mole had dug them for a certain purpose. Through them he made his way in the darkness, whenever he was hungry (which was most of the time, for he had a huge appetite!). And when he took an underground stroll he was almost sure to find a few angleworms, which furnished most of his meals.

To be sure, he did not despise a grub--if he happened to meet one--nor a cutworm nor a wire-worm.

The wonder of it was that Grandfather Mole ever found anything to eat, for the old gentleman was all but blind. The only good Grandfather Mole's eyes did him was to let him tell darkness from light. They were so small that his neighbors claimed he hadn't any at all.

Another odd thing about this odd person was his ears. The neighbors said

they couldn't see them, either. But they were in his head, even if they didn't show. And Grandfather Mole himself sometimes remarked that he didn't know how he could have burrowed as he did if he had been forever getting dirt in his eyes and ears. He seemed quite satisfied to be just as he was.

And he used to say that he didn't know what good eyes were to anyone whether he was under the ground or on top of it!

Liking to dig as he did, he certainly had nothing to complain about. His long nose was as good as a drill. And his front legs were just long enough so that he could reach his large, spade-like feet beyond his nose and throw the dirt back. His fur lay in one direction as easily as in another, never troubling him in the least when he was boring his way through the dry, loose soil of Farmer Green's garden.

So in spite of what might seem great drawbacks to others, Grandfather Mole was contented with his lot. The only thing he was ever known to grumble about was the scarcity of angleworms.

II

WHAT THE CAT CAUGHT

EVERYBODY knew the cat at Farmer Green's to be a great hunter. She had long since disposed of the last mouse that was so foolish as to venture inside her home. And being very big, and not at all timid, she had made such a name for herself in the neighborhood that even the rats looked on her as a monster to be avoided.

Now it often happened that this capable cat turned up her nose at the saucer of milk that Farmer Green's wife set before her with great regularity. And off she would go--sometimes to the barn, sometimes to the fields--to see what she could find that would furnish her both food and a frolic. For she thought it great sport to capture some small creature.

She was crossing the garden early one morning, on her way to the meadow, when she came upon Grandfather Mole. And having no pity for him--in spite of his blindness--she thought there was no sense in going any

further for her breakfast. She would enjoy it right there in the garden. But first she would play with Grandfather Mole, before eating. For she was a pleasure-loving dame. She must have her sport, no matter if her breakfast waited.

Grandfather Mole had blundered that morning. Burrowing his way just under the surface of the ground, he had broken through the sun-baked crust of the garden before he knew it. And as he groped about, surprised to find himself in the open, Miss Kitty had pounced upon him.

Grandfather Mole struggled to escape. And his captor let him go, to give herself the pleasure of pouncing upon him again. She knew well enough that he couldn't get away from her. He could run quite spryly for an old gentleman--it is true. But when he couldn't see where he was going, of what use was running?

Farmer Green's cat didn't know the answer to that question herself. She captured and freed Grandfather Mole several times. And to tell the truth, she couldn't help wishing he could see, so he could make the game livelier. But she was the sort of cat that believes in making the best of things. And she kept pretending that Grandfather Mole almost got away from her. She would let him run about for a few moments and then she would leap upon him as if she had nearly lost him.

It was great fun for the cat. But Grandfather Mole did not enjoy it in the least. He thought such treatment far from neighborly. And he quite agreed with old Mr. Crow, who had come hurrying up to see what was going on.

"Give him a chance! Give him a chance!" Mr. Crow called to the cat, as he glared down at her from a tree close by.

The cat had been about to spring at Grandfather Mole again when Mr. Crow spoke to her. It was only natural that she should pause and turn her head. And she looked at Mr. Crow none too pleasantly.

"I'll thank you to mind your own affairs," she said, and her voice was not nearly so polite as her words. "No gentleman would interrupt a lady at her breakfast," she added.

Something seemed to amuse Mr. Crow, for he laughed loudly. The cat didn't know what he was laughing at. And after staring at him a few moments longer she turned her head to look at Grandfather Mole.

It wasn't more than ten seconds since she had taken her eyes off him. But Grandfather Mole had vanished.

III

A BREAKFAST LOST

WHEN Farmer Green's cat looked around and discovered that Grandfather Mole had disappeared from the garden a puzzled look came over her face. She couldn't think where he had gone in just a few seconds.

But she knew then why Mr. Crow had laughed. And she was not pleased.

"Where is he?" she asked Mr. Crow. "You interrupted me at my breakfast and now I've lost it."

Mr. Crow was rocking back and forth on his perch, for a joke--on anybody except himself--always delighted him.

[Illustration: Grandfather Mole Escapes From Miss Kitty. (_Page 8_)]

"Grandfather Mole is right here in the garden," he declared.

"Then he must have hidden beneath a vegetable," the cat observed.

"I shouldn't say that, exactly," Mr. Crow replied.

"How far away is he?" the cat demanded.

"That would be hard to tell," Mr. Crow answered.

Farmer Green's cat had never liked Mr. Crow, for no particular reason. And now she certainly had a very special reason for being angry with him.

"It's all your fault," she scolded. "If you hadn't spoken to me I'd never have taken my eyes off Grandfather Mole.... The least you can do," she added, "is to tell me this instant where Grandfather Mole is."

"I've already told you," Mr. Crow reminded her. "He's here in the garden. Find him if you can!"

At that Farmer Green's cat began to run up and down between the rows of vegetables. But she had no luck at all. So after a while she came back and told Mr. Crow that she didn't believe him.

"Tut, tut!" said Mr. Crow. "You haven't looked in the right place."

"I've searched the whole garden!" the cat cried.

"Oh, no!" Mr. Crow exclaimed. "You've looked only on top of the ground. If you want to find Grandfather Mole you must look beneath the surface."

The cat was greatly disappointed when she heard that.

"You don't mean to say that he went into a hole, do you?" she asked.

"I do," Mr. Crow declared.

"I don't see one anywhere," she said.

"If I had I'd have been more careful how I let him run about."

"Ah!" said Mr. Crow. "I see you don't know that Grandfather Mole always carries a hole around with him, wherever he goes. He believes in having one handy, in case of sudden need."

"I didn't see it," the cat told him angrily.

"Of course not!" Mr. Crow agreed. "How could you see a hole until it's put in a certain place, ready to use?"

Well, the cat was puzzled. Somehow she couldn't quite understand Mr. Crow's remarks. And yet there seemed some sense in them, too. But she pretended that she understood, because she didn't want him to think she was stupid. And without thanking him for his explanation (for she was still angry) she turned and went off towards the meadow.

The whole affair amused Mr. Crow greatly. It kept him in a good humor all that day. And he went about telling everybody how Grandfather Mole had dug himself out of sight in the garden, almost under the cat's nose.

For that was exactly what had happened.

IV

A NEW WAY OF TAKING A STROLL

GRANDFATHER MOLE was digging a new gallery under the garden, leading out from his house into a field of corn, where he expected to find a good many fine grubs.

His work was half done, and he was under the cabbage-patch, when he found himself in the open air. Farmer Green's hired man's hoe had left a small hollow between two heads of cabbage; and as luck had it, Grandfather Mole's gallery led straight into it. So the first thing he knew, there he was right out in the light of early morning! And somebody called out in a cheery sort of voice, "How-dy-do, Grandfather Mole! It's a pleasure to see you! And isn't this a beautiful day?"

Grandfather Mole knew at once that he had nothing to fear, for he recognized Jimmy Rabbit's voice. And he knew, too, without being told, that he was in the cabbage-patch. For Jimmy Rabbit could be nowhere else at breakfast time.

"Good morning!" said Grandfather Mole. "I hope you are enjoying your breakfast."

"I am," Jimmy Rabbit answered. "And as soon as I've finished this leaf I'm eating now, I'm going to take a stroll. Won't you join me?"

"I don't care if I do," said Grandfather Mole--meaning that he'd be glad to walk with Jimmy. And in about half a minute Jimmy Rabbit said he was ready.

"Very well!" Grandfather Mole told him. "Let's be on our way! I'll see you at the edge of the duck-pond." And to Jimmy Rabbit's amazement he stuck his nose straight down into the loose dirt, thrust out his strong fore-feet, and was out of sight before Jimmy Rabbit could speak.

The duck-pond was just beyond the garden fence. And since Grandfather Mole had accepted Jimmy's invitation there was nothing for Jimmy Rabbit to do but to go to the edge of the pond and wait.

He grew very restless, for it was a long time before Grandfather Mole appeared. But at last the old gentleman's head came popping up out of the ground, and the owner of the head cried, "Here I am! And I'm glad to see you haven't kept me waiting, young man. I dug so fast I was afraid I'd get here before you did."

Really, he had made astonishing speed for one who had tunnelled his way underground. And being a polite person, Jimmy Rabbit could only tell Grandfather Mole that he had been very quick.

"And now we're this far," Grandfather Mole remarked, "I'd like to stroll over in the meadow--if that suits you."

Jimmy Rabbit said that it did. There was clover in the meadow. And he had waited so long for Grandfather Mole that he had begun to feel hungry again. A luncheon of clover-tops! It would be exactly what he needed.

"Then let's be on our way!" Grandfather Mole cried again. "I'll join you on the other side of the duck-pond!"

V

JIMMY RABBIT CAN'T WAIT

AFTER telling Jimmy Rabbit that he would meet him on the other side of the duck-pond, Grandfather Mole waded into the water and started to swim across.

Why he did that, instead of walking around on the shore, Jimmy Rabbit couldn't understand. He was so amazed that he stood still and stared at Grandfather Mole.

One thing was certain: Grandfather Mole could travel much faster through the water than he could underground. His strong legs and his broad, spade-like feet helped to make him a fine swimmer. And Jimmy Rabbit had noticed for the first time that Grandfather Mole's hind feet were webbed. It was no wonder that he felt quite at home in the duck-pond, which was made for web-footed folk.

Jimmy Rabbit was so interested in watching Grandfather Mole swim that he didn't start to run around the pond until the swimmer had almost reached the other side. Then Jimmy remembered suddenly that he had to meet Grandfather Mole over there. So he raced along the edge of the duck-pond at top speed. And since he was a very fast runner--for short distances--he met Grandfather Mole just as the old chap was crawling up the bank.

"There!" Grandfather Mole exclaimed. "I almost beat you this time, young man! If you're going to take a morning stroll with me you'll have to step lively."

Of course Jimmy Rabbit was too polite to explain that he had waited a long time while Grandfather Mole was tunnelling his way from the garden to the pond, and that he hadn't begun to run around the pond until Grandfather Mole had swum almost across it. He merely smiled and replied that he would do his best to keep up, for he shouldn't like to make Grandfather Mole wait, especially since he had invited Grandfather Mole to go walking with him.

"You don't mind staying here in the sunshine, I hope, while my coat dries?" Grandfather Mole inquired. "As soon as it's dry we'll start for the meadow."

Though Jimmy Rabbit was in a great hurry to reach the place where the clover grew he said that he would be glad to wait with Grandfather Mole. "The sun feels good on this cool morning," he observed. "And it's cheerful, too."

"Do you really think so?" Grandfather Mole asked him. And when Jimmy Rabbit assured him that he did, Grandfather Mole muttered that it was the strangest thing he ever heard of. As for him, he much preferred the darkness of his cool, damp galleries under the ground. And the only reason why he wanted his coat to dry was so that the dirt wouldn't stick to it.

It seemed to Jimmy Rabbit that Grandfather Mole's coat would never get dry enough to suit the old gentleman. But at last he announced that he was ready to stroll on. And when Jimmy Rabbit cried that he was ready, too, Grandfather Mole said, "Then let's be on our way! And I'll meet you----"

"Where the clover grows!" Jimmy interrupted.

Grandfather Mole had already buried his nose in the sand and was fast digging himself out of sight. And Jimmy thought that if he must wait for

him again he would wait in a pleasant place.

So Jimmy Rabbit hurried to the meadow. And as he lunched on luscious clover-tops he reflected that Grandfather Mole had a queer notion of taking a stroll with a friend. He made up his mind then and there that he would never again invite Grandfather Mole to walk with him.

VI

A HEARTY EATER

A GREAT eater was Grandfather Mole. And having an enormous appetite he was fortunate in being expert at finding angleworms.

To be sure, he had one advantage that the birds, for instance, didn't enjoy: he was able to prowl about his galleries through the ground and find the angleworms right where they lived. He didn't need to wait--as the birds did--until an angleworm stuck his head above ground.

Mrs. Jolly Robin had often wished--when she was trying to feed a rapidly-growing family--that she could hunt for angleworms as Grandfather Mole did. And this summer it seemed to her that she never would be able to take proper care of her nestful of children.

There was one of her family in particular that was especially greedy. Mrs. Robin had begun to suspect that he was no child of hers, but a young Cowbird. Almost as soon as she had finished building her nest she had discovered a strange-looking egg there. It had been the first to hatch. And now the youngster that came from it was just enough older than the rest of her children to jostle them, and to grab the biggest worms for himself.

It was no wonder that Mrs. Robin needed help. And seeing Grandfather Mole one morning, she explained her difficulty to him, asking if he wouldn't be so kind as to capture angleworms for her.

"Why, certainly! Certainly!" said Grandfather Mole.

And Mrs. Robin breathed a sigh of relief. She felt that her troubles were ended.

"Will you begin to help me at once?" she asked Grandfather Mole.

"I'm sorry that I can't do that," he told her. "You see, I haven't had my breakfast yet. So of course I must catch a few angleworms for myself."

Mrs. Robin was a bit disappointed. But she told Grandfather Mole that it was all right--that she knew a person of his age ought not to go without his breakfast.

So Grandfather Mole went back into the hole through which he had lately come up, first saying however that he would return after he had breakfasted.

Mrs. Robin then set to work herself, to find what she could to feed her clamoring family. Though she hurried as fast as she could, by the time the morning was almost half gone her children were still hungry; and to Mrs. Robin's distress Grandfather Mole had not yet showed himself again.

Mrs. Robin had been watching for him. And she had about given him up in despair when all at once he rose out of the ground.

"Good!" she cried. "Now you can help me, for you must have had your breakfast by this time."

"Yes, I have!" said Grandfather Mole. "I've just finished. But I always begin my luncheon at this hour. So if you don't mind I'll go down into my galleries and hunt for a few angleworms; and when I've had a good meal I'll come back here."

Well, what could Mrs. Robin say? She nodded her head; and she hoped, as Grandfather Mole vanished, that perhaps he would eat only a light luncheon.

But he never reappeared until mid-afternoon. And since he announced then that he was ready to begin his dinner Mrs. Jolly Robin saw that she could expect no help from him whatsoever.

She was terribly upset. But there was nothing she could do except to tell her husband that he would have to spend all his time catching angleworms for the family. And since he was glad enough to do that, Mrs. Robin managed to feed her children all they needed. Even the young

Cowbird in her nest had all he wanted.

And Mrs. Robin remarked that it was lucky her husband hadn't such a terrible appetite as some people's--meaning Grandfather Mole's, of course.

VII

TWO WORM-EATERS

THERE was one special reason--among others--why Grandfather Mole didn't like to show himself above ground in the daytime. This reason was--hawks! And there was something else that made him dislike to appear at night, too. This something else was--owls!

But of the two, Grandfather Mole disliked hawks the more, because they could see so far, while he (poor old fellow!) couldn't even see the end of his own nose, though goodness knows it was long enough! Since Henry Hawk could sit in a great elm far up the road and see him the moment he stuck his head out of the ground, while Grandfather Mole couldn't even see the tree, it was not surprising that Grandfather Mole preferred to stay below while Henry Hawk was awake and on watch.

Down in his galleries and chambers where it was dark as a pocket Grandfather Mole enjoyed himself thoroughly. It was lucky he was fond of worms and grubs. If he hadn't been it would be hard to say what he could have found to eat--unless it was dirt. There was plenty of that where he spent his time. But luckily he didn't have to eat it. He did enjoy digging in it, however. So it is easy to see that the way he lived suited him perfectly.

Not every one, of course, would have felt as Grandfather Mole did about angleworms, and grubs and dirt, or dampness, or the dark. Many of his bird neighbors, for instance, liked the same things to eat that he did. But most of them--except such odd ones as Solomon Owl, and Mr. Nighthawk, and Willie Whip-poor-will--loved the bright sunshine.

Spending a summer in Pleasant Valley was a small gentleman of the well known Warbler family, who had so great a liking for worms that he was known as the Worm-eating Warbler. This tiny person spent little or none

of his time in the tree-tops, but chose to stay near the ground. And more than once he had seen Grandfather Mole in Farmer Green's garden. He had heard somehow of Grandfather Mole's tastes and habits. And he was inclined to believe that it was Grandfather Mole that was to blame for the scarcity of worms in the neighborhood. It must be confessed that he felt none too kindly towards Grandfather Mole. He thought that it would be a good thing if somebody could persuade that odd, old chap to stay on top of the ground, instead of lurking most of the time down below where he could catch the worms right where they lived.

And one day the Worm-eating Warbler spoke to Grandfather Mole when he happened to see him come out of a hole.

"Why don't you live up here where you can get plenty of fresh air and sunshine?" he asked. "Don't you know they'd be good for your health?"

Grandfather Mole turned his head toward the speaker. That was as near as he could come to staring at him, since he couldn't see him. Grandfather Mole did not like the Worm-eating Warbler's remarks in the least!

"Why don't you"--he inquired--"why don't you come down into the ground and enjoy the close, damp air and the darkness? They'd be good for your health. I've thrived down below all my life; and I'm considerably older than you, young sir!"

Grandfather Mole's retort struck the Worm-eating Warbler dumb. He could think of nothing more to say. So he flew off and hid in some raspberry bushes. And he couldn't help saying to himself what a strange world it was and what strange persons there were in it.

VIII

LOSING HIS BEARINGS

IT often happened, when Grandfather Mole came up from his home under Farmer Green's garden, that he turned straight around and went back again. Sometimes, to be sure, he ran about a bit in a bewildered way, before he disappeared. For he never felt at home in the world above; and he was always uneasy until he felt the darkness closing in around him.

So nobody thought it strange when Grandfather Mole came tumbling up amongst the turnips one day and began running blindly around the garden, zig-zagging in every direction. Nobody that saw him paid much attention to him. But at last Rusty Wren, who had come to the garden to look for worms, noticed that Grandfather Mole was quite upset over something. He didn't seem to have any notion of going back into the ground, but kept twisting this way and that, with his long nose turning here and turning there, in a manner that was unmistakably inquiring.

"What's the matter?" Rusty Wren finally asked him, for his curiosity soon got the better of him.

But Grandfather Mole didn't appear to hear. Perhaps he didn't want to answer the question.

"Have you lost something?" Rusty Wren cried.

But Grandfather Mole never stopped to reply. He never stopped running to and fro. And Rusty Wren became more curious than ever. It was plain, to him, that something unusual was afoot. And he wanted to know what it was. "Can't I help you?" he asked in his shrillest tones, flying close to Grandfather Mole and speaking almost in his ear--only Grandfather Mole had no ears, so far as Rusty Wren could see. "Can't I help you?"

"Yes, you can!" Grandfather Mole answered at last. "If you wish to help me, for pity's sake go away and keep still! I don't want the whole neighborhood to come a-running. The cat will be here the first thing we know."

Rusty Wren felt sure, then, that Grandfather Mole was in trouble. And if he was worried about Farmer Green's cat, why didn't he dig a hole for himself at once, and get out of harm's way?

Since Rusty Wren didn't know, he asked Grandfather Mole--in little more than a whisper. But Grandfather Mole only shook his head impatiently, as if to say that digging a hole wouldn't help him this time.

Meanwhile some of Rusty Wren's friends had come up to see what was going on. And talking in low tones, so that they wouldn't attract the cat's attention, they agreed with him that there was some mystery about Grandfather Mole. But not one of them knew what it could be.

"He's lost something!" Rusty Wren declared.

"There's no doubt of that," Jolly Robin chimed in.

"What can it be?" little Mr. Chippy piped in his thin voice.

"I know!" Rusty Wren exclaimed abruptly. "It's his bearings! Grandfather Mole has lost his bearings!"

IX

GOOD NEWS FROM BELOW

WHEN Rusty Wren decided that Grandfather Mole had lost his bearings and that that was the reason why he was running about the garden in a most peculiar fashion, the rest of the birds began to wonder whether they oughtn't to help Grandfather Mole find them, since he was blind.

The Worm-eating Warbler, however, who was none too friendly towards Grandfather Mole, said that he had his doubts as to Grandfather Mole's blindness.

"If he can find angleworms in the dark he certainly ought to be able to find his bearings in broad daylight," he sneered.

But Rusty Wren pointed out that nobody could see bearings, anyhow--a remark that puzzled the Worm-eating Warbler more than a little. To tell the truth, he had no idea what bearings were. And at last he admitted that he didn't know.

"What are bearings, anyhow?" he asked Rusty Wren. "I don't understand what you mean."

"Oh, I mean that Grandfather Mole has lost his way," Rusty Wren explained. "He doesn't know how to get home."

The Worm-eating Warbler asked why Grandfather Mole didn't dig a new hole for himself, if he had lost the one he used when he came up in the garden. And when he saw that Rusty Wren couldn't answer his question the Worm-eating Warbler said he had his doubts as to Rusty Wren's ideas about Grandfather Mole.

"It's my opinion," he went on, "that Grandfather Mole has eaten all the worms that lived in the ground; and now he's hoping to find some in the

air."

Although everybody laughed at such a notion, the Worm-eating Warbler declared that he had a right to his own belief. And when he added that he hadn't seen an angleworm for two days there were a few of his bird companions that began to think perhaps there was some reason in his remarks, after all.

But Rusty Wren declined to change his opinion.

"There's only one way to be sure; and that's to ask Grandfather Mole!" little Mr. Chippy cried.

"It wouldn't do any good," Rusty told him. "Grandfather Mole won't answer any questions. But he's in some sort of trouble. There's no doubt of that."

They looked down at Grandfather Mole, who was still scurrying frantically about the garden. If he heard their talk he did nothing to let them know it. And they had begun to think that they would never know his secret when a person who looked somewhat like Grandfather Mole thrust her head and shoulders out of a hole in the ground.

"That"--Rusty Wren whispered--"that is Grandfather Mole's daughter. I know, for I've seen her before." And listening sharply, the bird people heard her say, "Don't worry, Father! I've found them."

Grandfather Mole didn't wait for anything more. He didn't even wait until he had found the opening in which his daughter had appeared. He began to dig right where he stood. And he was out of sight in short order.

Although the bird people didn't know it, he was anxious to reach his grandchildren. He had them out for a stroll through his underground galleries; and walking behind him they had taken a wrong turn when Grandfather Mole didn't know it. After looking for them in vain down below he had feared that they might have found their way into the open air. And that was why he was running about in such a distracted fashion.

X

MRS. ROBIN'S WISH

IN order to provide enough food for her children--as well as for the young Cowbird that she was bringing up--Mrs. Jolly Robin had to work hard every day. Though her husband gladly did what he could to help her, he complained sometimes about the stranger in their nest.

"Our family is certainly big enough without him," he often remarked. "We ought to turn him out to shift for himself."

But Mrs. Robin wouldn't hear of such a thing.

"It's not his fault that his mother left him here--in the egg," she would remind Jolly Robin. "If we set him adrift the poor child would starve--unless the cat got him."

And then Jolly Robin would feel ashamed that he had even thought of being so cruel to an infant bird, even if he was a Cowbird. So he would set to work harder than ever gathering worms and grubs and bugs; and before long he would find himself singing merrily, "Cheerily, cheer-up!" because it made him happy to know that he was doing somebody a good turn.

Once in a while Grandfather Mole thrust his head out of the soil of the garden, as if he were watching Mr. and Mrs. Robin at their task. Of course he couldn't see what they were doing. But Mrs. Robin said that it gave her a queer turn to have Grandfather Mole stick his nose out of the ground at her very feet. And since he was too busy catching angleworms for himself to help her and her husband, she wished he would keep out of sight.

Sometimes Grandfather Mole would speak to Mrs. Robin, or her husband; for he could hear them talking. And when you hear anybody in a garden exclaiming, "Oh, here's a big one! The children will like him, if I can ever pull him loose!" you may know at once that the speaker is talking about an angleworm. There can be no mistake about it.

When Grandfather Mole overheard Mrs. Robin making such a remark he would quite likely advise her to "try a smaller one."

Such a suggestion only made Mrs. Robin pull all the harder.

"Grandfather Mole wants all the big ones himself," she would splutter as soon as she and her husband were where Grandfather Mole couldn't listen to what she said. And then, probably, Jolly Robin would laugh and tell her not to mind, for there ought to be worms enough for everybody.

More than once, when Grandfather Mole had advised her to "try a smaller one," Mrs. Robin had declared afterward that she wished she could catch the biggest angleworm in the whole garden, just to spite old Grandfather Mole and teach him that other people had their rights, as well as he.

"Well, well!" Jolly Robin always exclaimed with a laugh. "Well, well! Perhaps some day you will find the grandfather of all the angleworms!"

XI

SURPRISING GRANDFATHER MOLE

SOMEHOW Grandfather Mole heard that Mrs. Robin hoped to capture the biggest angleworm in the garden. So the very next time he happened to find her at work there he offered her another bit of unsought advice. And Mrs. Robin liked it no better than any other of Grandfather Mole's counsels.

"Don't waste your valuable time looking for the biggest angleworm in the garden!" he told her. "I've caught him already."

Well, for once Mrs. Robin almost said something tart to the old gentleman. But she checked herself in time; not by biting her tongue, however, but by clapping her bill upon a fat bug that was trying to hide under a potato-top. And away she flew to her nest, leaving Grandfather Mole to talk to the air, if he wished.

"She went off without thanking me," he muttered. To be sure, he hadn't seen Mrs. Robin go, but he had heard the beat of her wings as she began her flight. He didn't know that he had barely escaped a sharp scolding.

"What do you think Grandfather Mole has just said to me?" Mrs. Robin asked her husband, whom she found at the nest feeding their children.

Jolly Robin made three guesses. But none of them was right. So his wife

repeated Grandfather Mole's remarks. And as usual Jolly Robin laughed.

"I shouldn't pay any attention to what Grandfather Mole says," he advised his wife. "I should keep an eye out for big angleworms, if I were you. Grandfather Mole may be mistaken. He may have caught only the second biggest one."

What her husband said made Mrs. Robin feel better. And she declared that she would surprise Grandfather Mole yet.

Strange to say, the very next day Grandfather Mole spoke to Mrs. Robin again and told her that "there was no use trying to surprise him, so she needn't waste her valuable time trying to do it."

This news made Mrs. Robin quite speechless. She couldn't think how Grandfather Mole had happened to learn of her remark, unless her husband had been gossiping with his friends. And if that was the case, Mrs. Robin didn't mean to let anything of the kind occur again. So she went on searching for her children's breakfast and said nothing to any one about Grandfather Mole's latest bit of advice.

Mrs. Robin worked harder than ever that day. It seemed to her husband that she had eyes for nothing but worms. Certainly she paid little attention to him. So he couldn't help feeling pleased when she called to him toward evening.

He flew quickly to her side. And he saw at once that she needed his help. For Mrs. Robin had an end of a pinkish-white worm in her bill, on which she was tugging as hard as she could.

"I think it's the biggest one in the garden!" she managed to gasp. "But it simply won't come up out of the ground."

"It must be the grandfather of them all!" Jolly Robin cried. And laying hold of the worm himself, he pulled with her.

Somehow there seemed a great commotion in the loose dirt at their feet, as they struggled to get the worm out of its hiding-place. And at last, to their great delight, they felt it--saw it--coming.

Then a shower of dirt flew into their faces and both Jolly Robin and his wife tumbled over backward.

It was no worm that Mrs. Robin had found, but Grandfather Mole's hairless tail sticking out of the ground. Together they had dragged him to the surface.

And if Mrs. Robin hadn't found the grandfather of all angleworms, at least she had found Grandfather Mole.

And she had given him a surprise, too.

XII

MR. BLACKBIRD'S ADVICE

OUT of the pine woods beyond the meadow Mr. Blackbird sometimes came to breakfast in Farmer Green's garden. He claimed that he came there to look for angleworms. But those that knew him best said that he wasn't above taking an egg out of some small bird's nest. And some whispered that he had even been known to devour a nestling.

Whenever he visited the garden he told everybody that he should never come there again because Grandfather Mole was too greedy. Mr. Blackbird said that Grandfather Mole didn't leave enough angleworms to make it worth his while to fly across the meadow. And one day when he chanced to meet Grandfather Mole he told him that it was a shame, the way he was treating Farmer Green.

"Farmer Green is good enough to let you live underneath his garden. But instead of showing him that you are grateful you eat all of his angleworms you can."

Grandfather Mole was thunderstruck. After pondering over Mr. Blackbird's speech for a few moments he raised his head. "What shall I do?" he asked in a plaintive voice.

"I should think you'd turn over a new leaf," Mr. Blackbird told him severely.

And Grandfather Mole promised that he would.

"I'll turn one over to-day," he said, "if you think it will please Farmer Green."

"There's no doubt that it will," Mr. Blackbird assured him in a

slightly more amiable tone.

A hopeful look came into Grandfather Mole's face. And after thanking Mr. Blackbird for his advice, he turned away and burrowed out of sight.

Then Mr. Blackbird selected a good many choice tidbits here and there, which he bolted with gusto. And after he had eaten what Jolly Robin, who had been watching him, declared afterward to have been a hearty meal and big enough for any one, Mr. Blackbird began to scold. He announced that there wasn't any use of his looking for anything more to eat in that neighborhood, for there wasn't enough there to keep a mosquito alive. And thereupon he flew away. Nor was anybody sorry to see him go.

Most of the feathered folk agreed that Mr. Blackbird ought not to have spoken as he did to Grandfather Mole. But Jolly Robin's wife said that she was glad there was somebody with backbone enough to tell Grandfather Mole the truth.

"If there were many more like Grandfather Mole in the garden we'd all have to spend our summers somewhere else," she said, "or starve."

Jolly Robin told her that she would find things much the same, no matter where she lived. "What's a garden, without an old mole or two?" he asked the company in general. And since nobody answered, Jolly Robin seemed to think he had silenced Mrs. Robin--for once.

But it was not so.

"A garden without an old mole in it would be just what I'd like," she cried.

"Well, anyhow, my dear," her husband said, "please remember that Grandfather Mole is going to turn over a new leaf."

XIII

TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF

SEVERAL days passed before Mr. Blackbird returned to Farmer Green's garden. And when at last he flew across the meadow one morning and



perched on the garden fence, to take a look around before beginning his breakfast, he saw that Mrs. Jolly Robin was making countless trips between the garden and her home. Early as it was she was hard at work feeding her nestlings.

"How are the pickings this morning?" Mr. Blackbird called to her.

"I'm finding plenty for my children to eat--if that's what you mean," Mrs. Robin replied somewhat haughtily. Mr. Blackbird laughed in the sleeve of his black coat. The rascal delighted in using language that did not please Mrs. Robin.

"If the pickings are good, then there must be fewer pickers," he remarked with a grin. "I suppose Grandfather Mole has taken my advice and turned over a new leaf."

"I don't know about that," said Mrs. Robin. "Anyhow, there are plenty of good crawling things stirring after last night's shower. Everything seems to be coming up out of the garden this morning."

She had scarcely finished speaking when Grandfather Mole poked his head from beneath a head of lettuce. Mr. Blackbird was just about to begin his breakfast. But he paused when he saw Grandfather Mole.

"Hello!" he cried. "What brings you to the surface?"

Grandfather Mole knew Mr. Blackbird's voice at once.

"I'm glad you're here!" he exclaimed. "I want you to tell Farmer Green the news. For I know he'll be delighted to hear it."

Then Mr. Blackbird did an ungentlemanly thing. He winked at Jolly Robin's wife. But he was a rowdy. So what could you expect of him?

"You've turned over a new leaf, have you?" he asked Grandfather Mole.

"Yes!" said Grandfather Mole. "And not only one! I've turned over a new one every day since I last saw you."

Mr. Blackbird replied that he was glad to know it.

[Illustration: Grandfather Mole Greets Mr. Meadow Mouse. (_Page 61_)]

"At least," Grandfather Mole continued, "I've turned over the newest leaves I could. Of course you can't turn over a leaf unless it's big enough to turn over. When a leaf is so young that it wraps itself around

the main stalk it's useless to try to turn it over. And it's a great waste of time waiting for it to grow.... But it's easy to turn over a big one." Suiting his action to his words, Grandfather Mole stepped up to a loose-growing head of lettuce, and thrusting his long nose under a drooping leaf he lifted it up and pushed it over.

As soon as he moved aside a little the leaf promptly righted itself. Grandfather Mole felt it brush his back as it swept into place again.

"Of course," he remarked, "you can't expect a leaf to stay turned over, unless you want to stand and hold it in place. And that would be a great waste of time--especially for one as hungry as I am." And poking his drill-like snout into the earth, he drew forth a huge angleworm, which quickly disappeared down his throat.

Mr. Blackbird choked; and not over anything he was eating, either. He choked because he was angry.

"It's no use," he said gloomily to Mrs. Robin, as soon as he could speak. "It's no use trying to get Grandfather Mole to stop eating angleworms. In my opinion, he's too old to turn over a new leaf--the way I meant.

"You can't teach an old Mole new tricks," said Mr. Blackbird.

XIV

THE NEW SUNSHADE

GRANDFATHER MOLE was resting in the shade of a toadstool. It was a stifling, sultry day. And having come up into the garden on some errand or other, Grandfather Mole had found the sunshine upon his back altogether too hot for his liking.

He was thinking how comfortable his own cool, dark chambers were, and wondering why anybody should prefer to live above ground in the heat, when a voice called to him, "What a fine umbrella you have! It must be a handy thing to have in one's family!"

It was Mr. Meadow Mouse speaking. And since Grandfather Mole knew him

to be a harmless sort of person he asked him to come over and join him.

"To be sure, there's not room enough for two under my sunshade," Grandfather Mole said. "But you can stand just outside it. And perhaps the sight of me in the shade may help you to feel cooler, even if you are in the sun."

Well, Mr. Meadow Mouse smiled a bit, all to himself. He knew that Grandfather Mole was odd. And being a good-natured person and wishing to please Grandfather Mole, Mr. Meadow Mouse joined him.

"What do you think of it now?" Grandfather Mole demanded of Mr. Meadow Mouse, almost as soon as he had stepped just outside the shade of the toadstool. "Don't you feel cooler already? I shouldn't care to stay in the garden a second without this sunshade."

Mr. Meadow Mouse wanted to be polite. So he replied that perhaps he did feel a bit more comfortable.

"You ought to own one of these," said Grandfather Mole.

"I've heard they're not always easy to find," Mr. Meadow Mouse remarked.

"That's true," Grandfather agreed.

"You don't--ahem!--you don't use this one all the time, do you?" Mr. Meadow Mouse inquired.

"No!" Grandfather Mole answered. "Not when it rains!"

"Then," said Mr. Meadow Mouse, "maybe you'll let me borrow your umbrella (or sunshade, as you call it) some rainy day."

"Certainly! You shall take it the next time it rains!" Grandfather promised.

As Mr. Meadow Mouse murmured, "Thank you!" he looked up at the sky with a knowing eye. He could see signs there. But of course Grandfather Mole had never seen the sky in all his life.

"The very next time it rains!" Mr. Meadow Mouse repeated, as if he wanted to be sure there was no misunderstanding about it.

"Certainly! Certainly!" Grandfather Mole said. "And as I've remarked before, I'd be glad to let you come under the sunshade now, beside me, if there was only room enough for both of us."

"You needn't trouble yourself," Mr. Meadow Mouse told him. And once more he scanned the sky eagerly.

"What's that?" Grandfather Mole cried suddenly, as he started up in alarm. "What struck the top of my sunshade?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Meadow Mouse. "I don't know what it was, unless it was a rain-drop."

XV

TWO AND A TOADSTOOL

GRANDFATHER MOLE had promised Mr. Meadow Mouse that he would loan him his toadstool sunshade--or umbrella--the very next time it rained. But when he agreed to that, Grandfather hadn't the slightest idea there was a shower coming. Mr. Meadow Mouse, however, had watched the dark clouds gathering in the sky. But he had said nothing of what he saw. And when the rain-drops began to patter on top of Grandfather Mole's sunshade Mr. Meadow Mouse cried in a brisk voice: "I'll thank you, sir, for the loan of your umbrella!"

Now, Grandfather Mole had never used his umbrella until that very day. It was not a quarter of an hour since he had discovered it standing in the garden. And when he had made his promise to Mr. Meadow Mouse he had had no idea that it was going to rain so soon. He didn't like the thought of loaning a new umbrella the first day he owned it.

"Can't you wait?" he asked Mr. Meadow Mouse. "Wouldn't some other day suit you just as well?"

But Mr. Meadow Mouse reminded him that a promise was a promise.

"Well, then--can't you squeeze in beside me?" Grandfather Mole asked him.

But Mr. Meadow Mouse said that he didn't see how he could do that. "Now that it rains there's no more room under your umbrella than there was a few moments ago, when the sun was shining."

"You're mistaken," said Grandfather Mole.

Mr. Meadow Mouse looked surprised. "I don't understand how that can be," he muttered.

"This toadstool is growing bigger all the time," Grandfather Mole explained.

"Very well!" said Mr. Meadow Mouse. "If you think there's room for two, I'll crowd in." As he spoke he wedged himself between Grandfather Mole and the stem of the toadstool umbrella. And immediately Grandfather Mole found himself out in the rain. The old gentleman didn't like that very well; and he said as much, too.

"It's plain that your umbrella didn't grow as much as you thought," Mr. Meadow Mouse retorted.

"You're mistaken," Grandfather Mole told him once more. "My umbrella grew exactly as much as I expected it would. But there was one thing I forgot."

"What was that?"

"You were growing at the same time," Grandfather Mole replied.

"Yes! And there's another thing that you forgot!" Mr. Meadow Mouse exclaimed.

"I doubt it," said Grandfather Mole. And though he didn't ask what it was, Mr. Meadow Mouse told him.

"You were growing too!" he cried.

But Grandfather Mole couldn't agree with Mr. Meadow Mouse.

"I'm too old to grow any more," he said.

"Pardon me," said Mr. Meadow Mouse, "but I don't see how a person with your well known appetite can help growing fat. And anyhow I'm sorry you're out in the rain. But it's certainly not my fault."

"We won't discuss that," Grandfather Mole told him. "And since I don't want to get wet I'm going home.... I hope you'll take good care of my new sunshade. And please don't forget to return it!" he added anxiously.

"I'll leave it right here for you," Mr. Meadow Mouse promised.

Though Grandfather Mole was far from satisfied he crawled into the ground and left Mr. Meadow Mouse to enjoy the rain pattering on the top of the toadstool. And the next day, to his great relief, Grandfather Mole found his sunshade in the same spot. Mr. Meadow Mouse hadn't taken it away. To tell the truth, he had tried to; but he had found that he couldn't move it. Grandfather Mole said it was the first sunshade that a borrower had ever returned to him.

And that was the truth. For he had never owned a sunshade before.

XVI

GRANDFATHER MOLE'S VISITOR

WHATEVER Grandfather Mole's neighbors might say of him, they never could claim that he was lazy. He was always busy. When he wasn't eating or sleeping you could be quite sure that he was digging. He never seemed to be satisfied with his house, but was forever making what he called "improvements." If there was one thing he liked, it was plenty of halls. He had halls running in every direction. And since a person could never tell in which one Grandfather Mole might be, visitors might roam about his dark galleries a long time without finding him.

If anybody happened to point out to Grandfather Mole that his house had such a drawback, Grandfather Mole always answered that he liked his house just as it was and that he wouldn't change it for anything--except to add a few more halls.

He was very set in his ways. He claimed that he wouldn't be comfortable in a house that had maybe only two halls--a front and a back one, as Billy Woodchuck's dwelling was known to contain.

Maybe that was the reason why Grandfather Mole never went visiting. And as for anybody else visiting him--well, what was the use when most likely you never could find him?

Nevertheless there was one of Grandfather Mole's neighbors who called at his house frequently, and for the very reason that he knew he could

probably do exactly as he pleased. Far from trying to find Grandfather Mole, Mr. Meadow Mouse always took pains to avoid him. And if by chance he met Grandfather Mole in one of his galleries Mr. Meadow Mouse was always extremely polite--and ready to run at a moment's notice.

During corn-planting time Mr. Meadow Mouse went regularly down into a gallery of Grandfather Mole's that ran under a corner of the cornfield. And somehow he soon grew quite plump.

Now, Grandfather Mole had met Mr. Meadow Mouse two or three times in that particular gallery. And he was not slow to notice that his visitor looked fatter each time he saw him. So one day Grandfather Mole asked Mr. Meadow Mouse bluntly what he was doing there.

"I'm taking a stroll!" Mr. Meadow Mouse told him meekly.

"Be careful"--Grandfather Mole warned him--"be careful that you don't take anything else!"

Trembling slightly (for Grandfather Mole could be terribly severe when he wanted to be) Mr. Meadow Mouse said that he hoped Grandfather Mole didn't mind if a person took a little exercise now and then in those underground halls. "On a warm summer's day it's delightfully cool down here," Mr. Meadow Mouse murmured.

His speech pleased Grandfather Mole.

"I'm glad there's some one that agrees with me!" he exclaimed. "Most people think I'm queer because I like to live underground."

Mr. Meadow Mouse hastened to assure him that he didn't think him queer--not in the least!

"Thank you! Thank you!" Grandfather Mole said. "And since you're a person of more sense than I had supposed you're welcome to ramble through my halls--so long as you don't take anything except exercise and a stroll."

Then it was Mr. Meadow Mouse's turn to thank Grandfather Mole.

"I feel better," he said, "now that you've given me permission to come here. For to tell the truth, I've often felt that I was taking a chance."

So matters went on smoothly for a time. And Mr. Meadow Mouse spent hours in the gallery under the cornfield. And he grew fatter every day.

Naturally he did not take such pains to dodge Grandfather Mole--after the talk they had had. And when the two met one evening Grandfather Mole stopped Mr. Meadow Mouse.

"There's something I want to say to you," he remarked. "I notice you're looking extremely well-fed. And I hope you're not eating any of my angleworms."

Mr. Meadow Mouse laughed right in Grandfather Mole's face.

"Oh, no!" he replied.

"Nor any of my grubs or bugs?" Grandfather Mole persisted.

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Meadow Mouse, making a wry face as he spoke--for he was rather a dainty person. And then he whispered something to Grandfather Mole.

"Oh!" said Grandfather Mole. "So that's it, eh? Well, I don't mind. I never eat anything of that sort. Take all you want of it!"

XVII

MR. CROW SCOLDS

OLD Mr. Crow was angry with Grandfather Mole.

Now, there was nothing strange about that, because Mr. Crow was always losing his temper. And his neighbors had long since learned not to pay much heed to his scolding. They knew that loud talk never really hurt any one. And generally Mr. Crow forgot a grievance quickly, because he was sure to get angry with somebody else.

There was one matter upon which Mr. Crow was especially touchy. That was corn. If anybody talked about corn-robbers, or even said much about corn as a food, Mr. Crow always lost his temper. And if anybody showed much liking for corn, or meddled in the cornfield, then old Mr. Crow would get so angry that he couldn't speak a pleasant word for days and days.

And now he was enraged because he had reason to believe that Grandfather Mole was eating the corn that Farmer Green had planted.

"He's eating it out of the hills," Mr. Crow told his neighbors.

"Farmer Green sometimes places scarecrows in the cornfield," Jimmy Rabbit remarked. "So why wouldn't it be a good idea to get him to set up a few scaremoles?"

"That wouldn't help any," Mr. Crow said gloomily. Usually the merest mention of a scarecrow sent him into a rage. But now he was too angry with Grandfather Mole to pick a quarrel with any one else. "Grandfather Mole couldn't see a scaremole if he ran head first into it," Mr. Crow continued. "And besides, even if he had eyes to see with, he's working underground. Grandfather Mole has dug galleries that run under the cornfield. And he can get right inside a hill of corn and gobble the seed corn without being seen."

"Then how do you know what Grandfather Mole is doing, when you can't see him?" Jimmy Rabbit inquired.

"The corn isn't coming up as it should," Mr. Crow told him. "So I scratched open a hill myself, to find out what was the matter."

"You didn't find Grandfather Mole, did you?" Jimmy Rabbit cried.

"No!" said Mr. Crow. "And I found no corn, either. But there was one of Grandfather Mole's galleries leading up to the center of the hill. So it's easy to guess where the corn goes."

Since news always travels fast in Pleasant Valley and tales such as Mr. Crow told spread more rapidly than any other, it wasn't long before Mrs. Robin repeated Mr. Crow's remarks in Grandfather Mole's hearing.

"What's that?" he called. "Please say that again!"

"Old Mr. Crow claims that you are eating Farmer Green's seed corn out of the hills," Mrs. Robin said. And she had the grace to grow somewhat red in the face, because it was hardly the sort of thing to say to an old gentleman like Grandfather Mole.

For a few moments Grandfather Mole was silent. He couldn't say a word for himself. And Mrs. Robin whispered to some of her friends that it certainly looked as if Grandfather Mole was guilty.

At last he managed to speak. But it was a most peculiar question that he

asked; so far as Mrs. Robin could see, it had absolutely nothing to do with the case:

"If you happen to see Mr. Meadow Mouse, will you tell him that I'd like to have a talk with him?"

XVIII

A TALK WITH MR. MEADOW MOUSE

THE next time she saw Mr. Meadow Mouse Mrs. Robin gave him Grandfather Mole's message. "He says," said she, "he'd like to have a talk with you."

"Does he?" Mr. Meadow Mouse exclaimed. "Now I wonder what he has to say! I returned his umbrella to him, after the rain. So it can't be about that."

"If I wanted to know, I'd go and find Grandfather Mole," Mrs. Robin suggested tartly.

Being a mild sort of person, Mr. Meadow Mouse thanked Mrs. Robin politely, both for the message and for the advice. And then, scampering to a certain spot that he knew, near the fence, he disappeared through an opening into the ground. It was one of Grandfather Mole's doorways. Mr. Meadow Mouse did not hesitate to use it, being one of those fortunate folk that are quite at home anywhere. It made little difference to him whether he was above the ground or in it. And aside from Grandfather Mole and his own family there was no one that knew his way about Grandfather Mole's galleries as well as Mr. Meadow Mouse.

To be sure, he had some trouble in finding the old gentleman, there were so many different passages in which to look for him. But at last Mr. Meadow Mouse met Grandfather Mole in a long tunnel that followed a row of newly planted corn.

"Ah, ha!" Grandfather Mole cried. "There's something I want to say to you."

"So I hear!" Mr. Meadow Mouse replied a bit anxiously, for Grandfather Mole sounded none too pleasant.

"You've been getting me into trouble with old Mr. Crow," Grandfather Mole complained. "He thinks I've been eating the seed corn that Farmer Green planted. And if I told him that it was you that's done it, and that you've been using my galleries to reach the hills of corn, Mr. Crow would never believe what I said."

"It looks bad for you, doesn't it?" said Mr. Meadow Mouse more cheerfully.

Somehow his remark displeased Grandfather Mole.

"You'd better be careful what you say!" he warned Mr. Meadow Mouse. "If you make me angry it will go hard with you."

Now, Grandfather Mole was known to be a terrible fighter when aroused. And Mr. Meadow Mouse had no liking for a fight with any one. So he moved backward a few steps and made ready to run.

"I'm sorry if I have caused you trouble," he said. "Couldn't you explain to Mr. Crow that you have tunnelled into the hills of corn in order to catch the grubs that would eat the corn if you didn't eat them first? Can't you tell him that you are helping the corn crop, instead of ruining it?"

Grandfather Mole shook his head.

"You're not much acquainted with Mr. Crow," he replied. "If he has made up his mind that I'm stealing corn nothing I could say would change his opinion."

"Can't I help you in some way?" Mr. Meadow Mouse asked. "I'd do almost anything, because you've let me use your galleries."

Grandfather Mole pondered for a time.

"Perhaps there is a way you can help," he said at last. "If you'll manage somehow to let Mr. Crow catch you in one of these hills, with your mouth full of corn, he'd know that you were the guilty party."

Mr. Meadow Mouse paled at the thought of such a situation. And his legs shook beneath him. "Oh! I--I couldn't do that!" he stammered. "Can't you think of some other way?"

"Yes, I can!" Grandfather replied. "I'll let him catch me in a hill of corn."

"With corn in your mouth?" Mr. Meadow Mouse inquired eagerly.

"No!" said Grandfather Mole. "With you in my mouth!" When he chose, Grandfather Mole could be very spry. And as he said those words he made a quick rush toward Mr. Meadow Mouse.

Then there was a great scurrying down there in the dark.

XIX

MR. CROW'S APOLOGY

IT was lucky for Mr. Meadow Mouse that he had placed a little distance between himself and Grandfather Mole down in the gallery under the cornfield. For when Grandfather Mole rushed at him, Mr. Meadow Mouse had just enough lead to escape. He made for the open air as fast as he could scramble, knowing that Grandfather Mole could never catch him once he reached the great out-of-doors.

Perhaps it was only natural that Grandfather Mole should have been angry with Mr. Meadow Mouse. Nobody likes to be accused of thieving--especially when he is innocent. And when the real corn thief (Mr. Meadow Mouse) declined to take the blame off Grandfather Mole's shoulders maybe his anger was not altogether uncalled-for.

After all, Grandfather Mole was glad, in a way, that Mr. Meadow Mouse had got away from him. "It proves"--Grandfather Mole told himself--"it proves that Mr. Meadow Mouse is not only a thief: he's a coward as well."

At the same time, any one that really knew old Mr. Crow couldn't have blamed Mr. Meadow Mouse for not wanting to follow Grandfather's suggestion. Grandfather Mole had asked Mr. Meadow Mouse to allow Mr. Crow to catch him with his mouth full of corn, so that Mr. Crow might know that it wasn't Grandfather Mole that was taking the seed corn, as Mr. Crow supposed.

Mr. Meadow Mouse was too well acquainted with old Mr. Crow to get himself into any such fix as that.

When he found himself above ground, after Grandfather Mole had chased him out of his galleries, Mr. Meadow Mouse felt so pleased with himself that he couldn't help telling his neighbors about his adventure. He boasted that he had been eating the seed corn out of the hills. And he declared that he didn't care if Mr. Crow heard of it himself.

"It's no more his corn than mine," Mr. Meadow Mouse said. "It belongs to Farmer Green. And since he has never spoken to me about missing any, I don't believe he cares. Besides, I've often noticed that he drops more kernels in a hill than he expects will grow. And really I've been saving him the trouble of pulling up a good many young stalks."

All this Mr. Meadow Mouse spread far and wide. And soon it reached the ears of old Mr. Crow.

"Ha!" Mr. Crow exclaimed. "So he's the thief! I'll have to teach him a lesson."

It was Jasper Jay that had related the news to his cousin, old Mr. Crow. And now he asked, "What about Grandfather Mole? Don't you think you ought to apologize to him?"

That was a strange thing for Jasper Jay to ask. He was the greatest rowdy in the woods, with shocking manners.

Mr. Crow gave Jasper a sidewise glance.

"Will you apologize for me?" he inquired. "I'm too busy to do it myself."

"Certainly I will!" Jasper Jay cried. "Leave that to me!" And he hurried off at once to find Grandfather Mole.

Jasper was lucky enough to see Grandfather Mole's head sticking out of the ground, when he reached the garden.

"I have a message for you!" Jasper told him. "My cousin Mr. Crow--the old black rascal!--was going to punish you for stealing corn. But he has made other arrangements."

"Mr. Crow"--Grandfather Mole spluttered--"Mr. Crow owes me an apology."

"Not now, he doesn't!" Jasper disputed.

"Why not?" Grandfather Mole cried.

"Because I've just brought his apology and given it to you," Jasper Jay replied.

But Grandfather Mole told him to be gone, and to take the apology away with him.

"It's nothing but an insult!" Grandfather Mole declared.

XX

A SIGN OF RAIN

OVER near the garden fence lay an old hollow log. Grandfather Mole discovered it one day; and thinking that it would be a fine place to look for grubs and other good things, he crept into one end of it.

If he had been able to see, near the other end of the log, a pair of bright eyes that peered at him out of the darkness perhaps he would have backed out in a hurry. But it was all right. The owner of the two eyes was only Sandy Chipmunk. And he spoke pleasantly to Grandfather Mole, in a soft sort of chatter, because he didn't want to alarm him.

"Good afternoon!" said Grandfather Mole. At Sandy's first word he had jumped. But as soon as he knew who was in the log with him he felt safe enough. "What are you doing here, young man?" Grandfather inquired.

"I came in to get out of the rain," Sandy told him.

"Rain!" Grandfather Mole exclaimed. "It's not raining!"

"I know that. But it's going to," Sandy Chipmunk replied.

"There's not the least sign of rain," Grandfather Mole declared. Being older than Sandy, he didn't hesitate to dispute what Sandy said. And he never troubled himself to apologize, either. Sandy Chipmunk noticed that, for he had been carefully reared by his mother. But he knew that Grandfather Mole was considered an odd old gentleman. And besides, what could Sandy have said that wouldn't have sounded rude?

"There's not a sign of rain," Grandfather Mole repeated, "so far as I can see."

"How far can you see?" Sandy inquired politely.

"Tut, tut!" said Grandfather Mole. "What I mean is that I haven't noticed anything that foretells rain. For instance, I haven't had a twinge of rheumatism since I don't know when."

"Well, I'm glad of that, anyhow," Sandy assured him. "But I saw a sign of rain to-day that perhaps you never noticed."

"What was that?"

"Farmer Green's cat was washing her face on the doorsteps," Sandy explained triumphantly. "It's a sure sign of rain. My mother has never known it to fail."

"Farmer Green's cat!" Grandfather Mole repeated after him. And he shuddered as he spoke. "Don't you know that she's not a trustworthy person? You surely don't depend on her, I hope! She's not dependable."

"Well, you can always depend on her to jump at you," Sandy observed.

"She's a coward--that's what she is," Grandfather Mole scolded. "You never heard of her chasing anybody that was bigger than herself, did you? You never heard of her attacking Fatty Coon!"

Sandy Chipmunk said that if the cat hunted coons, she kept it to herself.

"She's too wise to run any risk," said Grandfather Mole. "But if she's washing her face just because she expects rain, then she's stupid."

"If the cat wants to wash her face, why doesn't she stick her head out in the rain?" Grandfather Mole demanded. And without waiting for his young companion to answer, he went on to say that in his opinion anybody that washed his face in anything but dirt was stupid beyond all hope. "I claim," said Grandfather Mole, "that there's nothing quite like a dirt bath."

"There aren't many that would agree with you," Sandy Chipmunk told him.

"There's a lot of stupid people in this valley," Grandfather Mole retorted.

Sandy Chipmunk thought deeply for a few moments.

"I know of one person who would say you were right," he remarked at last.

"Who's that?" Grandfather asked him.

"The boy, Johnnie Green!" Sandy Chipmunk replied. "If you could _see_ his face you'd know that he takes a dirt bath every day!"

XXI

MRS. WREN TRIES TO HELP

"HAVE you found him yet?" Mrs. Rusty Wren asked Grandfather Mole one day when the old gentleman had left his dark underground home to brave the dangers of the garden.

"Found whom?" Grandfather Mole inquired.

"Why, your grandson! I saw him wandering about the garden a little while ago. And I supposed of course that you had come up to find him."

"Now, that's strange!" Grandfather Mole exclaimed. "I wasn't aware one of them had strayed away from the house.... Which of my grandchildren was it that you saw!"

"I don't know them by name," Mrs. Wren replied. "But this was just a tiny chap."

"Then it must be my little grandson Moses!" Grandfather Mole cried. "He's the smallest of the lot.... I must find him at once, before the cat catches him."

Mrs. Wren saw that Grandfather Mole was greatly disturbed. And though she had enough to do--goodness knows!--to look after her own family, she told Grandfather Mole that she would help him find his grandchild.

"That's kind of you, I'm sure," Grandfather Mole remarked. "If I had



your bright eyes I wouldn't need anybody's help."

"Oh, you're welcome!" Mrs. Wren assured him. "I shouldn't want a youngster of mine walking about the garden alone. I'm glad to do what I can. And meanwhile you had better stay close to that hole, for there's no need of your running any risks. If I can't find young Moses Mole, then nobody can."

Grandfather Mole said she was very kind and that he would take her advice. So he stationed himself beside the hole through which he had lately appeared and waited there while Rusty Wren's wife looked for his grandson.

She was a quick, spry little body--was Mrs. Wren. It wasn't long before she surprised the object of her search in the act of eating a fat grub beside a pumpkin.

"Here he is!" Mrs. Wren called to Grandfather Mole. "I've found him. Do you want to come and get him, or shall I bring him to you?"

[Illustration: Billy Woodchuck Calls on Grandfather Mole. (_Page 106_)]

"You'd better bring him," Grandfather Mole answered. And anybody could see that he was vastly relieved.

A little later Mrs. Wren called to him again.

"What shall I do?" she asked. "He won't mind me. And he's too heavy for me to carry."

"That's Moses, without a doubt!" Grandfather Mole declared. "Yes! If he won't mind, it's certainly my grandson Moses. He's the littlest of the family; and his mother has always spoiled him.... I suppose"--Grandfather Mole added--"I suppose I'll have to go and get him."

"Wait a moment!" Mrs. Wren suddenly sang out. "There's some mistake. This little fellow says his name isn't Moses!"

Well, Grandfather Mole's mouth fell open, he was so surprised. "Then what's his name?" he demanded.

"He says it's Mr. Shrew. And he seems very angry over something or other," Mrs. Wren explained.

"Tell me"--Grandfather Mole besought her--"has he a neck?"

Mrs. Wren glanced at the small person whose breakfast she had interrupted.

"Yes, he has one," she reported.

"Then he's no relation of mine," Grandfather Mole said. "Or at least, he's no more than a distant cousin. And I don't even know him." He was relieved to learn that his grandson Moses Mole was not wandering about the garden, after all. "Maybe you never stopped to think that none of our family have necks--so far as you can notice."

And now Mrs. Wren looked at Grandfather Mole. And she saw that his head was set right on his shoulders.

"I was mistaken," she faltered. "I'm sorry if I upset you about your grandson."

"It doesn't matter now," Grandfather Mole assured her. "To be sure, I was alarmed. And when you said he wouldn't mind I was sure it was Moses."

"Children," said Grandfather Mole, "are not brought up as strictly as they were when I was young."

XXII

TWO FAMOUS DIGGERS

BILLY WOODCHUCK had decided to move into new quarters before cold weather set in. Old dog Spot had learned where he lived; and to Billy's dismay Spot was spending altogether too much of his time watching Billy's front door.

There was only one reason why Billy Woodchuck didn't exactly care to dig a new home for himself in the pasture just then. The fall crop of clover was about to head out. And being very fond of clover blossoms, Billy hated to spend his time digging.

He was telling his troubles one day to old Mr. Crow. And as usual, Mr. Crow had an idea.

"Why don't you get somebody to help you?" he asked.

Billy Woodchuck looked a bit doubtful.

"Who is there?" he inquired. "Nobody would be willing to dig for me unless I paid him."

"Well--if I were you I'd offer a modest wage," Mr. Crow suggested.

But Billy Woodchuck shook his head.

"I couldn't pay anybody anything--unless it was clover-tops," he explained. "And why should any one dig for them when there are thousands to be had for the taking?"

Mr. Crow agreed that Billy Woodchuck knew what he was talking about.

"But," said Mr. Crow, "I've usually found that there's a way out of every difficulty. What you must do is to find somebody that likes to dig--somebody that is so crazy to dig that he'd help you just for the fun of the thing."

Billy Woodchuck looked still more doubtful.

"Who is there?" he asked once more.

Meanwhile Mr. Crow had been thinking rapidly--for he was a quick-witted old scamp.

"I'll tell you!" he cried. "There's Grandfather Mole!"

Although Billy Woodchuck brightened considerably--for Mr. Crow's ideas made him more hopeful--he observed that he didn't know Grandfather Mole. "I've heard of him, however," Billy told Mr. Crow. "He lives in Farmer Green's garden. But you know I never go there. I stick to the fields. I don't like to get too far from home."

"For once, then," said old Mr. Crow, "I should break my rule--if I were you--and visit the garden. Find Grandfather Mole and have a talk with him!"

So Billy Woodchuck decided that he would take Mr. Crow's advice. And though he hated to leave the clover-patch he set out that very afternoon to find Grandfather Mole and ask him if he wouldn't like to help dig a winter home in the pasture. But before starting on his journey Billy

Woodchuck waited until Mr. Crow came back and told him that Grandfather Mole had just appeared above ground.

Billy Woodchuck hurried off across the pasture as fast as he could scamper. And in a short time he reached Farmer Green's garden. He was somewhat out of breath, because there had been plenty of good things to eat all summer long and he was round as a ball of butter.

Luckily he arrived just in time. Grandfather Mole had been on the point of creeping down into one of his many underground halls when he heard a strange voice say, "Stop a moment, please! I've something important to say to you."

It was a pleasant voice. If it hadn't been, Grandfather Mole wouldn't have waited an instant. He turned his head toward the place where the voice came from and said, "What is it, stranger? And talk fast, because I'm busy. I have some digging to do down below."

XXIII

SEEING A SAMPLE

GRANDFATHER MOLE'S remark made Billy Woodchuck smile.

"I'm a very busy person. I've some digging to do down below," Grandfather had said.

"You're just the one I need to help me!" Billy Woodchuck exclaimed, for he had heard somewhere that if you want a thing done, you should get a busy person to do it.

"I hope you don't want me to catch angleworms for you," Grandfather Mole told him. "The neighbors are always asking me to do that. And I've decided that I can't do it. Somehow I can't help eating 'em myself."

Billy Woodchuck assured him that he had no use at all for angleworms.

"What I want," he explained, "is a good digger to help dig a new house for me."

"Is anybody else going to help too?" Grandfather Mole inquired carefully.

"No--only myself!" Billy said.

"Then I'm sorry; but I can't work for you," Grandfather Mole announced. And he had already turned away, as if the business were ended, when Billy Woodchuck stopped him again.

"Perhaps"--said Billy--"perhaps I can find one or two others besides myself."

"You've missed my point," said Grandfather Mole. "I don't want anybody else to help--not even you! For I won't share the fun of digging with any one."

Well, Billy Woodchuck could hardly believe his own ears.

"You shall have things all your own way!" he cried. "I won't scratch a speck of dirt, I promise you!"

"That's different," Grandfather Mole remarked. "That's more like it. And if you're a person that keeps his promises we shall not have a bit of trouble."

"You can depend on me," Billy Woodchuck told Grandfather Mole. "While you're working for me I'll spend all my time in the clover-patch.... And now," he added, "I'd like to see a sample of your digging."

"Come right this way!" Grandfather Mole directed. And Billy Woodchuck followed, and looked carefully at the small hole that Grandfather Mole pointed to with an air of pride. "Here's one of my doorways," he announced.

With his head on one side, Billy Woodchuck inspected it.

"It's well made," he said, "but of course it's entirely too small for my house. If you work for me you'll have to dig bigger than that."

That speech did not please Grandfather Mole. "Small doorways are the only kind to have," he declared. "I wouldn't make a bigger one for anybody--not even for Farmer Green himself."

Billy Woodchuck soon saw that Grandfather Mole was a stubborn old fellow. No matter what he said, he couldn't get Grandfather Mole to change his opinion. And at last Billy Woodchuck gave up all hope of

having Grandfather Mole dig for him.

"A door like yours would be of no use to me," he said dolefully. "I never could squeeze through it."

"My goodness!" Grandfather Mole cried. "How big are you, anyhow?" It must be remembered that he couldn't see his caller.

"I'm big enough," said Billy Woodchuck, "to put you in my pocket, almost."

Grandfather Mole turned pale at the mere thought of such a thing.

"I--I'd no idea I was talking to a monster," he stammered. "I don't believe I want to dig for you, after all." And saying a hasty good afternoon, he popped through his doorway and vanished at Billy Woodchuck's feet.

Greatly disappointed, Billy Woodchuck turned homewards. "I'd have been in a pretty fix if he had finished my house, and I had tried to move my furniture into it," he muttered. "It's lucky I asked to see a sample of Grandfather Mole's work," said Billy Woodchuck.

XXIV

FOLLOWING THE PLOUGH

A GOOD many of Grandfather Mole's neighbors sneered at him, and said he was queer. Mr. Blackbird was one of these scoffers. Though he was a lazy scamp, he always managed to look sleek and well fed. And he liked the same fare that Grandfather Mole did.

"You're a goose to work so hard for your food," Mr. Blackbird jeered one fine spring day as he sat on the garden fence and looked down at Grandfather Mole. "You ought to change your habits. Just look at me! I get plenty to eat. And I do precious little digging for it, believe me! I tell you, there's a better way than yours!"

Naturally, Grandfather Mole couldn't look at Mr. Blackbird. But he raised his head in his odd fashion.

"What's that?" he inquired. "What's a better way than mine?"

But Mr. Blackbird was in no hurry to tell all he knew.

"Suppose," he said, "I should explain my method to you. You could follow it for some weeks and live well without much trouble. And then--when the spring ploughing is finished--I should want you to supply me with angleworms for the same length of time. You know, you can't expect me to give away my secret for nothing."

"But I like to dig," Grandfather Mole replied. "You may have noticed that I am built for that sort of work."

What Grandfather Mole said was true. His drill-like nose, his powerful fore-legs and big, strong feet all served to make him the fastest digger in Pleasant Valley.

Mr. Blackbird regarded him with a sly smile. "You seem to be built for eating, too," he observed.

Grandfather Mole soon confessed that Mr. Blackbird's mention of angleworms had made him so hungry that he was ready to promise to do as Mr. Blackbird had proposed.

So Mr. Blackbird cried that it was a bargain.

"And now," he said, "listen carefully while I whisper the secret, for I don't want everybody to hear it.... I follow the plough," he explained. "It turns up a great quantity of angleworms. The only work I have to do is to pick 'em up with my bill."

Somehow Grandfather Mole did not appear as delighted as Mr. Blackbird had expected.

"How can I follow the plough when I can't see where it's going?" he asked.

"Silly!" Mr. Blackbird jeered. "You can find your way along a furrow, can't you?"

Grandfather Mole thought he could do that. "But you're forgetting Henry Hawk!" he reminded Mr. Blackbird. "Farmer Green ploughs in the daytime. And Henry Hawk might see me."

"He wouldn't be likely to notice you if you crept along the bottom of a

furrow," Mr. Blackbird assured Grandfather Mole. "Anyhow, I'll be there. And I'll warn you if Henry Hawk appears in the sky."

Grandfather Mole was relieved. And Mr. Blackbird told him to be ready the next morning.

XXV

STUBBORN AS EVER

FARMER GREEN hadn't finished ploughing his first furrow before Mr. Blackbird and Grandfather Mole began breakfasting on the angleworms that the plough turned up.

Very soon Mr. Blackbird began to regret his bargain with Grandfather Mole, for Grandfather was even a greater eater than Mr. Blackbird had supposed. Mr. Blackbird began to be afraid that there wouldn't be worms enough left for himself.

"This is a fine place to dig," he remarked to Grandfather Mole in what seemed a careless way. But he watched Grandfather Mole narrowly, with a grin on his face, to see what the old chap would do.

And after that Grandfather Mole couldn't resist burrowing in the loose earth now and then. It pleased Mr. Blackbird to see him amuse himself in that fashion, because while he was digging Grandfather Mole lost his chance at a good many angleworms. They found their way quickly down Mr. Blackbird's throat. And it was not long before he was in the best of spirits.

Day after day while the spring ploughing went on, the strange pair followed the plough together. And since Grandfather Mole spent more than half the time in digging, Mr. Blackbird felt that on the whole their bargain had proved a good one.

When Farmer Green had finished the last furrow in the field Mr. Blackbird told Grandfather Mole that the ploughing had come to an end.

"And now"--he said--"now it's your turn to carry out your part of the bargain. I showed you where the food was plentiful; and it's time for

you to begin furnishing me twenty fat angleworms a day."

Grandfather Mole was amazed. There hadn't been a word said about the number of angleworms he was to supply Mr. Blackbird.

"Twenty!" he exclaimed. "Nobody said 'twenty!'"

"That's so," said Mr. Blackbird. "It was forty."

Grandfather Mole was staggered. But he didn't dare object again, for fear Mr. Blackbird would double the number once more and make it eighty.

"Agreed!" he cried. "And I'll have them ready for you at midnight regularly."

"Midnight!" Mr. Blackbird repeated after him, in great surprise. "Nothing was said about 'midnight!'"

"That's so!" Grandfather Mole admitted. "It was one o'clock in the morning." And in spite of everything Mr. Blackbird said, Grandfather Mole wouldn't change the time. Everybody knew that he was very stubborn.

"A hundred angleworms in the middle of the night wouldn't do me any good," Mr. Blackbird complained. "I'm always asleep at that time."

"You'd better change your habits," Grandfather Mole replied. "You ought to be glad to change your hours for sleep, if it would make things easier for you."

Now that was very like the sort of remark that Mr. Blackbird himself had once made to Grandfather Mole. But coming from Grandfather Mole the suggestion did not please him. He even lost his temper. And he told Grandfather Mole that he was the queerest person in all Pleasant Valley.

But that speech did not trouble Grandfather Mole.

"It's everybody else that's queer--and not I!" he declared.

THE END

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