

THE WILD WOOD

*T*HE 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.'